

The Book of Hosea

Chapter 13

In Hosea, chapter 13, the prophet Hosea, speaking the word of the LORD, continues to reveal how adulterous Israel will be restored to the LORD.

Hosea 13:1 When Ephraim spoke, trembling, He exalted *himself* in Israel; But when he offended through Baal *worship*, he died. (NKJ)

Let us recall that Israel is often referred to as Ephraim, because the kingdom's first ruler, Jeroboam I, was of the tribe of Ephraim. The tribe of Ephraim had truly been blessed by God. Joseph was one of the twelve tribes that came from Jacob or Israel. We read in Genesis 46:20 that "to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him." Ephraim was the younger of the sons of Joseph. By custom, Manasseh ought to have reigned alone in that family, carrying on the legacy of his father Joseph. Instead, God chose to raise up two chiefs in the house of Joseph and preferred the younger (Ephraim) to the first born (Manasseh). Later in Jewish history, we continue to read of these half-tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim.

Ephraim's descendants grew in number and power and at last rose to royal dignity, when Jeroboam I became the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel. By way of reproach, the prophet Hosea here says that all trembled at the single voice of Ephraim. Ephraim ought to have been inferior to his brother, who was the firstborn, and yet he excelled all the tribes. So great then was his fault that he afterward had fallen away into gross idolatry. When God was pleased to choose and anoint Jeroboam I as king, superstition and idolatry flourished in the kingdom. Instead of expressing his gratitude to God, Ephraim "exalted himself in Israel," and with the greatest of audacity immediately corrupted the whole worship of God.

Hosea adds, "When he offended through Baal worship, he died." Jeroboam at first made the golden calves, but it was his successor who borrowed Baal worship from the neighboring Sidonians. Jeroboam had died, but now the whole northern kingdom was facing destruction. Ever since they had fallen away from true and lawful worship, God's hand was opposed to them, and they were oppressed by adversity. Previously, the Israelites flourished, especially the tribe of Ephraim from whom King Jeroboam arose. When Israel's king spoke, the neighboring nations trembled in fear. Yet, now, the northern kingdom was as good as dead.

God had given great blessing to the half-tribe of Ephraim, but on account of their disobedience and unfaithfulness, He now was replacing their blessings with curses.

2 Now they sin more and more, And have made for themselves molded images, Idols of their silver, according to their skill; All of it *is* the work of craftsmen. They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!"

The Israelites sin "more and more." They had turned their backs on God and turned to idols. When Israel departed from the worship of God, they made calves and added many superstitions one after another, as if by design they wished to subvert God's law.

God had given silver to be used for currency and other useful purposes. Yet, the people acted perversely, by using silver to make themselves gods. They “have made for themselves molded images, idols of their silver, according to their skill.” What greater ingratitude could they have showed to God than so to pervert the uses for which God gave us silver. Instead of using their gifts to God’s glory, they used their “skill” to make silver idols.

A lesson in true versus false worship

The Israelites worshipped idols of their own invention. “All of it is the work of craftsmen.” God condemned their idols, which they created for themselves. More often than not, what is pleasing to the judgment and reason of men is what God detests. That is why God teaches us in His Word that in order to worship Him rightly, we must not mix human inventions with what He has prescribed in His Word. No one should bring forward his own inventions or that which seems good in his eyes.

John Calvin explains what the prophet Hosea here means: “One great difference between the true worship of God and all fictitious and degenerated modes of worship, is obedience to the word of God; if we be wise according to our own judgment, all we do is corrupt.” How so? “Because whatever men devise of themselves is a pollution of divine worship.”

As we have learned, the apostle Paul in Colossians, chapter 2, refutes all the inventions of men by this one argument—that they are the traditions of men, though they may have the “appearance of wisdom.” All worship that is not founded on the command of God, found in His Word, is a perversion of true worship. Such false worship does not flow from heavenly wisdom but from that natural wisdom that does not know God.

John Calvin comments, “It then follows, as we have said before, that **in religion nothing is to be attempted by us, but we are to follow this one law in worshipping God—simply to obey His word.**” (emphasis added)

The foolishness of idolatry

How foolish it is to worship “the work of craftsmen,” inanimate objects of gold, silver, stone, or wood. They even say of their gods, “Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!” By kissing Hosea means an expression of worship or adoration, as is evident from other passages in Scripture. In 1 Kings 19:18, God says, “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” To kiss Baal was a sign of reverence and an expression of worship. In contrast, Psalm 2 calls us to “Kiss the Son,” which means to bow in submission and godly reverence before the Son of God, who is Jesus Christ.

So also many superstitious people today in various religions kiss their manmade idols, images, crosses, and religious symbols.

To sacrifice to the calves was no small act; for some it even meant sacrificing their own children to Moloch, killing their own children for a dead god. Such is the extreme wickedness to which men may fall when they pursue their own religious inventions. How insane it seems to murder one’s own children and yet kiss a golden calf that is dead. Yet, even today many people in our culture value material things and the pursuit of

personal peace and affluence over the sanctity of human life. Many today value money and material things more than their own family, more than their own children.

Hosea's warnings speak to us today, warning us not to depart from the pure worship of God, lest we also give ourselves up to such wicked and insane devotions.

Perhaps this is why John's first epistle ends with these words (**1 John 5:19-21**): "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [And now pay attention closely to John's final words] Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." May we heed Hosea and John's call to keep ourselves from idols. Let us worship the true God, as He has commanded us in His Word, neither adding to nor subtracting from His pure worship in anything.

Sadly, the Israelites departed from the true God and true worship . . .

3 Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud And like the early dew that passes away, Like chaff blown off from a threshing floor And like smoke from a chimney.

The prophet Hosea here employs four similes to show the condition of Israel. (Remember that a *simile* is a comparison using the word *like* or *as*.)

First, "they shall be like the morning cloud." Although they were lofty and proud, the Lord will yet shake off from them whatever power they may have. Like the morning cloud that vanishes after sunrise, so they will soon quickly disappear.

Second, "they shall be like the early dew that passes away." Like the early dew, they will quickly pass away and discover that "it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Third, "they shall be like chaff blown off from a threshing floor." John the Baptist, echoing the prophet Hosea, had this to say of Jesus in Matthew 3:12: "His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The wheat represents God's elect, while the chaff represents the reprobate. By their works, the majority of the Israelites had proven themselves to be enemies of God. They had become "Lo-Ammi"—not God's people (Hosea 1:9).

Fourth, they shall be "like smoke from a chimney." Just as smoke produces thick darkness and having gone out of the chimney disperses and disappears, so also these proud people—despite the great praises they lavished upon themselves—will not continue. They will disappear from the land.

4 "Yet I *am* the LORD your God Ever since the land of Egypt, And you shall know no God but Me; For *there is* no Savior besides Me.

Even if much of Israel was apostate, yet God remained the Lord of His true people, true spiritual Israel. His elect remnant remained. He had redeemed His people out of the land of Egypt for a grand purpose.

God says, “Yet I am the Covenant Lord your God.” In contrast to their dumb idols, God is Yahweh, the covenant Lord, who is the Creator of the universe and all that is in it. He is “the living God” (Hosea 1:10). God redeemed the Israelites from the land of Egypt on the condition that they would be His people. How shameful it was for them to adopt the superstitious practices of the Gentiles who did not know Him. They were to devote themselves completely to God. Instead, they had run after other lovers, other gods.

Likewise, since we belong to Christ, none of us ought to live according to our own wills. Christ died and rose again from the dead so that He might be the Lord of the living and the dead. Let us therefore be faithful to Him in all things, clinging to Him and His Word alone as our only rule for faith and practice.

God says, “you shall know no God but Me; for there is no Savior besides Me.” So much for religious universalism. Both the Old and New Testament teach that Christ alone is the only way to salvation. There is only one true God. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). The apostles Peter and John proclaimed, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ *alone* is the Savior and Lord.

In the case of Israel, God had purchased her for Himself by bringing them out of Egypt, just as Christ has purchased His bride, the Church, at the cost of His own blood, redeeming us from slavery to this present age and its false god, the devil. Israel ought to have been content with her one Redeemer, and she ought not to have sought for herself other gods. So also in our day we must be content with Christ alone and not seek for ourselves *other* gods.

The prophet Isaiah declared: “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, *And* rely on horses, *Who* trust in chariots because *they are* many, *And* in horsemen because they are very strong, *But* who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, *Nor* seek the LORD!” (31:1). Let us beware of trusting in politicians and governments to save us. Let us beware of trusting in the things of this world—our financial institutions, our insurance companies, our shopping malls, our homes, or our vehicles. Let us beware of trusting in ourselves. Rather, let us place our trust in the Holy One of Israel; let us seek the LORD!

God says in verse 5: “I knew you in the wilderness, In the land of great drought.”

When men are known by God, why don't they apply all their mind, body, spirit, and soul, so that they may remain fixed on Him? Jesus warned that all too often “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word,” and people become unfruitful (Matt. 13:22).

Please turn in your Bibles to Galatians, chapter 4, verse 9. Here the apostle Paul spoke to the Galatians, saying, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Gal. 4:9-11). A very interesting passage . . . but we will have to wait for another occasion to consider exactly what it is saying. In any case, let us take to heed these warnings; let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the

author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). And let us be careful that we do not allow the cares of this world to take our gaze off of Jesus!

Since God first knew us and first favored us with His grace, how great and shameful is our ingratitude if we fail to seek Him and obey Him in return.

God says, "I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." If the Lord had not miraculously sustained His people in the wilderness, by raining down manna from heaven and giving them water to drink, the people would have perished. God intervened on their behalf, acting against the usual course of nature that would have brought about their death. Without His fatherly care, the Israelites would have had no hope of life. In the desert, where not a grain of corn grew, the people learned that they could not live without God. Yet, although they had learned God's law and then seen God's fatherly kindness to them, the Israelites went astray and followed profane superstitions. They committed spiritual adultery.

6 When they had pasture, they were filled; They were filled and their heart was exalted; Therefore they forgot Me.

When their great depression in the wilderness was over, they found prosperity. In the promised land, the Israelites found rich pasture and agricultural abundance; it was a land flowing with milk and honey. Prosperity led the nation to become self-sufficient and self-loving. They had self-esteem, but they lost their esteem for God. Their hearts were exalted with pride, but they failed to exalt God as their grandparents had. This was a nation that forgot God.

How similar this seems to our nation, which was founded largely upon Christian principles. Our nation has lost the Ten Commandments, lost the knowledge of the Lord that we find in His Word, and forgotten God. Our nation abounds in supermarkets, restaurants, prosperity, and pride. Yet, is the Church of Christ prospering in our land? I'm afraid that it is not.

Moses foretold Israel's apostasy in **Deuteronomy 32:13-20**: "13 He made him ride in the heights of the earth, That he might eat the produce of the fields; He made him draw honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock; 14 Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs; And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the choicest wheat; And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes. 15 " But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; **You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese!** Then he forsook God *who* made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. 16 **They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods;** With abominations they provoked Him to anger. 17 They sacrificed to demons, not to God, *To gods* they did not know, **To new gods, new arrivals** That your fathers did not fear. 18 **Of the Rock *who* begot you, you are unmindful, And have forgotten the God who fathered you.** 19 " And when the LORD saw *it*, He spurned *them*, Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. 20 And He said: 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *will be*, For they *are* a perverse generation, Children in whom *is* no faith" (emphasis added).

While famine long has ravaged parts of the world such as Africa, God has long blessed America agriculturally, as He did ancient Israel. Yet, we also have grown fat; we are obese. We have provoked God to jealousy with foreign gods. We are infatuated with anything that is *new*. We want *change*. We want *new* things. We don't care what the

change is, but we want it. Yet, we are also unmindful of Christ, who is the Rock. As a nation, we have “forgotten the God who fathered” us. We are an increasingly secular, post-Christian nation.

The prophet Ezekiel declares the same thing of the ancient city of Sodom. When their stomachs were well fed, they became proud. We read in **Ezekiel 16:49-50**: “Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit*.”

The Sodomites were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned about the poor and needy. They were haughty, prideful, and committed gross immorality. Therefore, God destroyed them, raining down brimstone and fire upon them.

Shockingly, Jesus argued that the Israelites were even worse than the Sodomites, for not only did they despise the poor, they also despised God (cf. Matt. 10:15). Not only were they sinners, but they were also experts at religious hypocrisy.

John Calvin comments, “this passage teaches us, that we ought to use our abundance temperately and frugally, and that we ought, in the first place, beware lest the bounty of God should introduce a forgetfulness of Him. For it is an extreme perversion, that when the more largely God pours his gifts upon us, our hearts should be more narrow, and that His benefits should be like veils to cover our eyes.”

**7 "So I will be to them like a lion; Like a leopard by the road I will lurk;
8 I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their rib cage,
And there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them.**

The writer to the Hebrews had it right: “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31, NAS). In stark language, the prophet Hosea again proclaims the vengeance of God on apostate Israel. The prophets used harsh language in an attempt to awaken hypocrites, for self-confidence and pride make us like drunk men, unable to think clearly. When we are prideful and self-confident, we do not hesitate to despise all God’s warnings and threats. Thus, Hosea employs three similes to express God’s terrifying vengeance that is imminent. He seeks to take away from hypocrites their vain confidence and to terrify them into fearing God’s vengeance, which was drawing near.

First, God says, “I will be to them like a lion.” God is by nature merciful and kind. Jesus is the Lamb, but He is also “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Revelation 5:5). Like a lion, God will leap on them with the greatest fury. Second, God says, “like a leopard by the road I will lurk.” Third, God says, “I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs.”

He adds, “I will tear open their rib cage, and there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them.” What a terrifying image of a horrid death for the unrepentant.

John Calvin comments on the use of these stark images of God’s judgment: “If we are by nature so slothful and careless, and [if] when God does not stir us up, we indulge our own delusions, we ought to notice these figurative representations which [should] shake off from us our tardiness and show to us how dreadful the judgment of God is. For the same purpose are those metaphors respecting the eternal fire and the worm that never

dies. For God's seeing the feelings of men to be so torpid [i.e., lazy, apathetic] has in Scripture applied those things which may correct their sluggishness."

9 " O Israel, you are destroyed, But your help is from Me.

Why is Israel destroyed? Whose fault is it? It is no one's fault but their own. They have self-destructed—in their pride, in their greed, in their obesity, in their idolatry, in their self-love, they destroyed themselves. Nevertheless, God does not point out the cause of their destruction at this point. He just reminds them that they "are destroyed."

God had always shown Himself as a Helper and Redeemer to Israel. Yet, Israel had spurned God's favor. This verse teaches us that people in vain clamor against God in their miseries. He would always be ready to help them if they were not to spurn the favor offered to them. Whenever then God does not help us in our necessity and causes us to languish or pine away in our afflictions, it likely may be because we are not willing to receive His help. On the contrary, we oppose His counsel. As the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear."

God always stands ready to help His people who turn to Him and trust in Him. God would have helped the Israelites, if they would have humbled themselves before Him and trusted in Him instead of trusting in themselves and their idols.

Let us pray that we, our neighbors, and our nation will repent and turn back to God before we and our nation self-destruct!

10 I will be your King; Where is any other, That he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'?

It as if God said, "Though the Israelites rail against Me, that I do not pursue my usual course of kindness, yet it is most false, for I remain ever the same. I am always ready to show kindness to men, for I do not forsake the works of my hands. My mercy endures forever. Since therefore I continue to show favor towards My children, let them examine themselves when they cry and I do not answer. When they suffer and find no relief, let them acknowledge it to be their own fault, for they would have found me a deliverer had not a change taken place in them." (cf. Psa. 138:8)

The Israelites had foolishly placed their trust in their earthly king to save them. Yet, he was now powerless to help them. Israel's confidence that they would be secure as long as they had prudent men ruling over them was a vain confidence. They thought that their cities were on every side unassailable and strong to keep out enemies. Yet, when God rose up against them, no wall would prove high enough and no army in the world would prove strong enough to protect them.

The Israelites had told their judges to give them a king. Yet, God had not approved of their decision. For God had appointed King David for this purpose—that he might unite together the whole body of the people. God intended that His Church and chosen people should remain under one head so that they might be safe. It was therefore a great sinful act of rebellion when the ten tribes wished for themselves a new king. By defecting from the kingdom of David, they were denying God and His sovereign rule

over them. (Likewise, when they polluted His pure worship, they denied His sovereign rule over them as their Lord and Master.) So also God had said to Samuel when Israel demanded a king, “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7).

By making Jeroboam their king, the Israelites had renounced God as their King. By this defection, Israel had destroyed the unity of the old covenant Church and initiated a kingdom marked by rebellion and disobedience toward God and His perfect law. It was a cursed beginning, and so the end of their kingdom shall also be cursed.

God is well pleased when we obey Him, when we look to His Spirit to preside over our decisions, when we listen to His Spirit speaking to us through His Word, and when we begin with prayer to Him. In contrast, when we despise God’s Word and do whatever pleases us, disastrous consequences are sure to follow.

11 I gave you a king in My anger, And took *him* away in My wrath.

God did not interfere with the Israelites’ unwise decision of making Jeroboam their king. God says that in response to their rebellious, ungrateful hearts, “I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath.”

God ordains all things that come to pass, but that does not mean that He approves of evil. God does not authorize evil actions. The Westminster Confession of Faith explains in chapter 5, paragraph 4: “The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men,(1) and that not by a bare permission,(2) but such as have joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding,(3) and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends;(4) yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.(5) (1)Rom. 11:32,33,34; 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; 1 Kings 22:22,23; 1 Chron. 10:4,13,14; 2 Sam. 16:10; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27,28. (2)Acts 14:16. (3)Ps. 76:10; 2 Kings 19:28. (4)Gen. 1:20; Isa. 10:6,7,12. (5)James 1:13,14,17; 1 John 2:16; Ps. 1:21.

God placed David over His chosen people to be their king; and so the Davidic line continued until Christ, who is the Son of David and the King of kings. Yet, God also ordained that Jeroboam should be king over Israel; yet this king was given to them in judgment. The people had acted sinfully in making Jeroboam their king; yet in doing so they also were carrying out God’s judgment upon them on account of their sin. God chose Jeroboam as His instrument of judgment, in part also to punish the defection and ingratitude of Solomon. Yet, God had no participation in the sins of the people.

God is a just judge, and He uses the wicked acts of wicked people to carry out His predetermined purpose. However, God does not violate their wills. Their minds choose according to their natures; they sin because they want to sin. God does not force them to sin. Here lies the mystery of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, a mystery which ultimately, it seems, surpasses our ability fully to comprehend or explain.

In His wrath, God will take away the illegitimate kingdom of Israel.

12 " The iniquity of Ephraim *is bound up*; His sin *is stored up*. 13 The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him. He *is* an unwise son, For he should not stay long where children are born.

What does it mean that Ephraim's iniquity is "bound up"; "His sin is stored up"? It means that God is keeping the memory of all their sins under seal; He has not forgotten them. In vain they flatter themselves, thinking that they are off the hook, just because they have not yet seen the full outpouring of God's judgment and wrath upon them. No longer did the Israelites have hope of pardon. The day of God's vengeance had come.

Let us beware that we never attempt to disguise ourselves before God when He is patient with us. God remembers our sin; "be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

"The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him." In other words, God's judgment shall come quickly and swiftly; it will be a sudden destruction.

"He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long where children are born." Showing utter foolishness, the unwise son does not leave the womb. (Let us remember that in Biblical times, they were not able to perform C-sections, as are commonly performed today.)

This child would die in the womb because of His own stubbornness. His mother tried and tried to deliver him, but he refused to be delivered. He refused to be saved from death. This boy was so stubborn that he would rather die than to be delivered. And so it is with the rebellious sinner; he would rather die than let God deliver him from his slavery to sin. He would rather die than surrender himself to the will of another. He hardens himself and grits his teeth and tries everything he can do to resist God and His salvation. The truth is that we have no choice; we must either humble ourselves under God's mighty hand or perish. So let us be wise and repent!

14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.

God would save the people if only their hearts weren't hardened to Him. Sadly, they would rather die than turn to the Lord.

God's promise to ransom Israel "from the power of the grave" and to "redeem them from death" may look forward to their deliverance from Assyria in the future. It also looks forward to the future redemption of God's people, when God raises up the bodies of His true Israel, the true Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), from their graves to everlasting life.

Although death should now swallow up all people, although the grave should consume them, yet God is superior to both death and the grave. God can slay death, for He can abolish the grave.

In **1 Corinthians 15:51-57**, the apostle Paul writes: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible,

and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In verse 55, Paul alludes to Hosea 13:14. God is sovereign over death and the grave. If we are true Christians, then we have the hope of the resurrection from the dead. We have the promise of God that He will raise us up with Christ, giving us resurrected bodies and giving us the eternal victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even though it is contrary to the rules of nature, God is endued with that incomprehensible, supernatural power by which He can raise us from a state of decay. Since He created the world from nothing, He will also raise us up from the grave, for Christ is the death of death, the grave of the grave, the ruin of ruin, and the destruction of destruction. **At the Cross, God declared victory over death!**

The Israelites of Hosea's day would have known this to be true if they hadn't been so hard-hearted and stubborn. Yet, if we will humble ourselves and trust in Christ, showing ourselves to be true Israelites, then God will show Himself to us as He who has conquered death.

Hosea 13, verse 14 concludes with these words: "Pity is hidden from My eyes." The irreclaimable wickedness of the people did not allow God to change His severity into mildness so as to give the people any hope of pardon and salvation. God will have no compassion on apostate Israel; they shall be reduced to nothing. They are a miserable and reprobate people.

15 Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren, An east wind shall come; The wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness. Then his spring shall become dry, And his fountain shall be dried up. He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.

Ephraim had proven fruitful among his brethren. The tribe of Ephraim had excelled all the rest except Judah. Yet, now he would be judged for His pride and ingratitude toward God. "An east wind shall come; the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness." Let there be no mistake about it; this judgment is from the LORD; it is "the wind of the Covenant Lord."

"Then his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up." Ephraim's agricultural and material prosperity will vanish when the Lord's wind of judgment sweeps over him. This wind will be the scourge of God.

When we enjoy times of prosperity, let us beware lest we abuse God's favor and entertain a false confidence in ourselves, as we see Ephraim had done. Let us flee from pride and haughtiness. When we prosper, let us ever fear, lest something like this should happen to us. The more kindly God deals with us, the more constantly we should pray to Him and draw close to Him, lest we slumber and become slothful toward God while He is indulgent toward us.

Hosea warns us that God can suddenly, in a moment, upset the prosperity of men. When God withdraws from us His favor, no one in the world can do anything to put it back. At any moment, the Lord can make us dry; He can give us drought and destroy our agriculture, our commerce, even our whole economy.

The Israelites, being deeply proud of their own strength, thought that they were supplied by exhaustless fountains. Yet, God showed Himself to be the Lord of Creation.

“He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.” He seems to say, “However hidden your treasures may be, yet this wind shall penetrate into the inmost recesses, so that nothing shall be safe from its violence.” The force of God’s vengeance would be so violent that Ephraim could not be secure in any of his fortresses; the wind of God would penetrate the very inmost springs of the earth.

16 Samaria is held guilty, For she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, And their women with child ripped open.

The verdict is pronounced: Guilty, as charged! “Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God.” Hosea had repeatedly pronounced God’s imminent judgment on Israel. Here it is as clear as can be. Guilty, guilty, guilty! God says, “I will hold this rebellious people guilty!”

“They shall fall by the sword, their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped open.”

In **Hebrews 10:29-31** we read, “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Their punishment is just, for they are guilty rebels who spurned God’s grace. Despite God’s longsuffering and His great love in sending true prophets to warn them, the people refused to repent. Thus, God, who is infinitely just, must now take vengeance on so desperate a rebellion. The Assyrian invasion did not happen by chance. This army, which was to invade and destroy the country of Samaria (Israel) would be conducted by the hand of God. Though the Assyrians wished to extend their own borders and were influenced by their own sinful greed and evil, yet God would use them as instruments to execute His own judgment. So that the Israelites might know how dreadful the vengeance would be, he describes the horrible atrocities that the Assyrians would commit against the Israelites—“the infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped open.” How horrific a judgment!

How can we reconcile such an image with God’s infinite love? Such an objection is nothing new. John Calvin says, “If anyone object and says that infants and babes as yet concealed in the wombs of their mothers do not deserve such a grievous punishment, as they have not yet merited such a thing; it may be answered that the whole human race are guilty before God, so that even unborn infants are yet included as being under guilt. Therefore, God cannot be charged with cruelty, though He may use His own right

towards them. God also warns that He will devolve the sins of parents on their children. Since it is so, let us learn to acquiesce in these awful judgments of God, though very repugnant to our feelings; for we know that we must not contend with God, and that it would be extreme presumption for us to do so; in fact, it would be impious audacity. So although the reason for this punishment may not appear to us, we ought yet reverently regard this judgment of God. And let us contemplate that if infants be not spared, even those as yet hid in their mother's womb, what will become of adults? What will become of the old, who through their whole life have continued to provoke the vengeance of God? The Lord no doubt intended by these words to terrify those godless despisers of His Word, with whom He was contending. 'How great a judgment,' he says, 'hangs over you, and how tremendous! Since your infants shall not be exempted; for I shall involve you in the same judgment when they shall be dashed against the stones, after having been drawn out of their mothers' wombs. When such a dreadful punishment shall be inflicted on them, what shall be done to you? For the cause of the evil exists in you.'

Let us conclude this study by meditating upon John Calvin's prayers in response to Hosea, chapter 13:

Almighty God, you do so kindly call on us daily by Your voice. You call us to offer ourselves meekly and calmly to be ruled by You. You have exalted us to a high degree of honor by freeing us from the dread of the devil and from that tyranny which kept us in miserable fear. You have favored us with the Spirit of adoption and of hope. O grant, that we, being mindful of these benefits may ever submit ourselves to You and desire only to raise our voice for this end—that the whole world may submit itself to You.

May those who seem now to rage against You finally be brought, as well as us, to render You obedience, so that Your Son Christ may be Lord of all, to the end that You alone may be exalted and that we may be made subject to You and finally raised up above and become partakers of that glory which has been obtained for us by Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant, Almighty God, that as You have given us Your only begotten Son to rule us and have by Your good pleasure consecrated Him to be King over us that we may be perpetually safe and secure under His hand against all the attempts of the devil and of the whole world---O grant, that we may allow ourselves to be ruled by His authority and so conduct ourselves that He may ever continue to watch for our safety. As you have committed us to Him, may He be the Guardian of our salvation. Do not allow us to turn aside or fall, but preserve us ever in His service until we be finally gathered into that blessed and everlasting kingdom, which has been bought for us by the blood of Your only Son. Amen.