

HOSEA

People Who Forgot GOD

by S. Franklin Logsdon

"For Israel hath forgotten his maker." (Hosea 8:14)

"My people have forgotten me days without number." (Jeremiah 2:32)

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CHAPTER ONE -

THE DIVINE DIAGNOSIS

THE BOOK OF HOSEA views the ancient people of GOD in a deplorable state of spiritual debility. They seemed totally unaware of their condition. Like physical malignancy, it crept unsuspectingly upon them as they swerved from the faith.

The official files of the Great Physician reveal in careful detail the weakening state of the people.

- In I and II Samuel they were careless
- In Kings, dissipating
- In Chronicles, anemic
- In Isaiah, critically ill
- In Jeremiah and Ezekiel, delirious

And throughout the minor prophets, limping invalids. The oft-repeated concern of JEHOVAH, together with His call for their return, was ill-regarded. Their bent toward idolatry turned their hearts from His tender entreaties, and propelled them into a precarious situation. We observe in this chapter the chief deficiencies from which they suffered.

THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6).

First, in what sense were the people destroyed?

Second, why did they lack knowledge when GOD's words were said to be nigh unto them, even in their mouths?

One thing is evident. The people were not destroyed in the sense of being exterminated. They

were not consumed because of the LORD's unfailing compassions (Lamentations 3:22, 23). They were living. JEHOVAH was dealing with them, desiring and calling for their return. But as a spiritual force they were destroyed. Their testimony was gone. Their influence for GOD had ceased. Instead of commanding the respect of the heathen, they compromised with them. Instead of turning them to the only true and living GOD, they were attracted to their lifeless idols.

The reason they lacked knowledge is not difficult to discover. They rejected it (4:6). This does not necessarily mean that they deliberately thrust it aside. There is a more subtle procedure. They simply ignored it, apparently without realizing that this was a serious offense - contempt of high Heaven! Their lack of heavenly truth, with such truth everywhere available, was inexcusable.

THE LACK OF GROWTH

"For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer" (4:16).

To expect growth of a people who lacked the vital essentials of growth would be, to say the least, a most disappointing outlook. One cannot grow in spiritual stature when one is destitute of the very essentials requisite to such a development. To stand still would be a state of stagnancy, and stagnancy is death. Where there is life, there is movement. The very terminology of the Scriptures describes this movement as either forward or backward. Israel was found sliding back.

The figure of a heifer is tellingly descriptive. Has the reader ever witnessed the unpredictable antics of a calf?

Its erratic moves and sporadic plunges have provoked many an outburst of laughter. But when it comes to a chosen people with whom the infinite GOD has entered into covenant, and to whom He has given a special commission, and of whom He requires a holy conduct, it is far from humorous. When their behavior is of a hapless, careless nature, Heaven languishes rather than laughs. Divine disapprobation is at once indicated. It is unspeakably sad when such a favored people begin to falter. Sadder still when they persist in a divergent course. Israel went back.

THE LACK OF DEDICATION

"Ephraim is joined to idols" (4:17).

The joining complex had an early beginning. When those who are joined to the LORD deliberately divert their course, they develop a propensity to attach themselves and their affections to some other object.

"Hear, O Israel . . . thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5) was the strong appeal which JEHOVAH had made to the people who were called by His name. This left no room for idols. But, revolting against the Most High, they reverted to the most lowly. This is ever the case. The room denied the LORD in human hearts will soon be invaded by idols. The influx is always rapid. As every backslider knows, they are difficult tenants to evict.

Hearts that are captured by idols are not easily recaptured for the LORD. **"Let him alone"** (4:17) is the scriptural counsel, thus indicating how futile are purely human devices to retrieve the wayward. Perhaps one would not spar with Satan if one really knew how tenaciously he can affix

his grip. Yet Ephraim was joined to idols.

THE LACK OF SATISFACTION

"Their drink is sour" (4:18).

This information comes from Him who knows the innermost thoughts of men (John 2:25). No one can attempt to drink of broken cisterns without being mocked. The way of the transgressor is always hard; yet, as spurs in the steed, rioting emotions propel people onward in a way that is not good.

The appetite for sweetness is universal. The quest for such satisfaction never ceases. The complaint of JEHOVAH against His people concerned the strong tendency of their appetites to lead them into realms of dissatisfaction, indeed into disappointment. Yet enlightened people in every day will flout the admonitions of the LORD as they drift into sorrow with the drive of their uncurbed appetites. The man at the bar who seizes the glass of sparkling spirits, knowing full well the end to which it may lead, is not one whit worse in principle than the man who will deliberately close his eyes to divine instruction and follow his appetites into inevitable remorse.

Sweetness is preferred by man; it is provided by God.

But the man who rejects GOD's sweetness sooner or later tastes of satanic bitterness. The counsel of the LORD is sweet (Psalm 104:34). The words of the LORD are sweet (Psalm 119:103). The light of the LORD is sweet (Ecclesiastes 11:7).

The fruit of the LORD is sweet (Song of Solomon 2:3). The joy of the LORD is sweet. These are but a few sweet extracts a wayward one denies himself.

THE LACK OF DEVOTION

"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God" (5:4).

The omniscient One scrutinized the schedules of His people. He found Himself ruled out. He who should have filled their thoughts, occupied their hearts and motivated their endeavors, was subtly edged out of their lives. What a sinister thing this is! The force of the words "**will not**" would definitely indicate that this matter had been called to their attention repeatedly.

It further indicates persistent refusal to shape their activities so GOD might be honored in their conduct. No less than six times these people had been reminded of the fact that "**I the Lord thy Lord am a jealous God.**" He desires and deserves all we are and have.

No excuse for withholding is legitimate. The prophet called for readjustments, but such reforms found no favor in their cluttered minds.

THE LACK OF HUMILITY

"The pride of Israel doth testify to his face" (5:5).

Can imagery be more expressive? Unbelief spawns strange and unbecoming traits, and haughtiness is the most despicable. It is self in its worst display. Submission to the Lordship of

Deity then becomes foreign to the thinking and absent from the actions. This was Israel. He made himself the master of his destiny, evolved a hybrid religion, consorted with pagans, became allied with Assyria and Egypt, and destroyed the foundation of his liberty and happiness.

Pride was reflected in Israel's countenance, but it proved to be a veneer soon to be dissipated. Pride generally goes before a fall. In this instance, it was the springboard to disaster. The foundation of a disregarded heritage began to crumble and the consciousness of JEHOVAH's presence departed. Yet, in spite of the multiplying portents on the horizon, they displayed no inclination to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They appeared self-sufficient and acted independently of the LORD. No other course is so certain of failure.

THE LACK OF CONSIDERATION

"They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness" (7:2)

JEHOVAH sadly asserted.

This is the deadening effect of persistent waywardness. They no longer had an ear for divine appeals. Hardness of heart had set in. the LORD continued to call for His people to return unto Him, but such calls met with only cold inattention. The prevalence of this attitude forced the LORD to lament: **"I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me . . . Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider"** (Isaiah 1:2, 3).

Such lamentations were repeated. **"Hear, ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy,"** cried the prophet Micah. **"O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?"** (Micah 6:2-3). This is a striking evidence of divine grief occasioned by inconsideration.

THE LACK OF SEPARATION

"They are all adulterers" (7:4)

is the next observation, and one grossly serious, for the LORD had put a difference between Israel and the Egyptians (Exodus 11:7). He also made a distinction between the holy and the unholy (Leviticus 10:10), between the clean and the unclean (Leviticus 11:47).

In the days of Hosea, these distinctions were lost sight of; the line of demarcation was utterly ignored; and the people operated according to their own desires.

The prophet Amos gives us something of JEHOVAH's reaction in this regard: **"Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble . . . ?"** (Amos 8:6-7).

In a further description of the northern kingdom's spiritual debility, the Scriptures state, **"Ephraim is a cake not turned"** (7:8). A good mixer may be popular, but an unturned cake is not palatable. Under the designation of "Ephraim," the ten tribes were found to be weak and wandering. Ephraim is also termed **"a silly dove without heart"** (7:11). How senseless and heartless is one who, being blessed with all spiritual blessings; turns to compromise with the world and to complicity with evil!

Five times in Deuteronomy, the forebears of these backsliders were reminded that they were **"an**

holy people unto the Lord." Now, it did not seem to matter to decadent Israel.

THE LACK OF EARNESTNESS

"They have not cried unto me with their heart" (7:14).

Here is a revealing statement. Testimonies, confessions, even prayers, may have the ring of genuineness to fellow believers without eliciting the approbation of the LORD. **"Come, and let us return unto the LORD"** (6:1) met with this divine retort: **"They have not cried unto me with their heart."**

JEHOVAH had witnessed with evident sorrow the rapid deterioration of sacred matters in that day. The people attempted to appease their seared consciences in a form of worship. In so doing, they transgressed His covenant and trespassed against His law (8:1). Counting their procedure as purposeless, unauthorized and distasteful, the LORD was forced to ignore it in toto. He termed their oblations vain, their incense abominable, and their called assemblies iniquitous (Isaiah 1:13). A stronger indictment against His people is nowhere discoverable.

THE SUMMATION OF THE CASE

"My people are bent to backsliding from me" (11:7).

Their waywardness commenced with a tendency, continued with carelessness, and culminated in a habit. With the deliberate rejection of the Light, there was a proportionate increase of darkness. As witnessing declined, wickedness developed. When the curtain went down on the Old Testament period, the words of the people were **"stout against... the Lord."** They thought it vain to serve GOD and profitless to keep His ordinances (Mal. 3:13, 14). It was clearly a case of chronic rebellion. Nor were spiritual conditions bettered during the dark inter-testament period.

When the curtain was raised again on the stage of GOD's revealed dealings, we find a people who had no room for their MESSIAH, hated intensely His message, conspired frequently to destroy Him, perjured their testimony against Him, cried concertedly for His death, and finally had Him nailed to a Roman cross.

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