

Hosea — Time to Seek the Lord

(Hos. 10:12)

READ: Hosea 10:12-11:9; 14:1-4

Introduction. Hosea has been called "the prophet of the broken heart." His experience demonstrates that love yields the sweetest joy on earth and also the most profound sorrow. The framework of the Book is that of a shattered romance, a tale of unfaithfulness to the marital vow. That this prophecy is the very Word of God is evidenced by the fact that this sordid story has little appeal upon the purely secular level. Its appeal is much deeper than that.

Against the backdrop of his own personal woe, his shattered home and betrayed love, Hosea received a vivid revelation of the very heart of God. He was able to see that God too was a sufferer. God too was a victim of unfaithfulness. In God's case Israel was the unfaithful wife, God was the wronged husband, the victim of His beloved's infidelity as she deserted Him to go off after false gods. So great was Hosea's love, so gracious was his forgiving heart, that he searched and found Gomer, long since deserted by her paramours, and took her back into his own home. After that experience how winsomely does he preach God's love for Israel and how tenderly does he plead, "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God" (, 14: 1). Hosea anticipates and prefigures the one who "came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not" (John 1: 11 ASV), the one who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).

The prophecy of Hosea falls naturally, but unequally, into two parts. Part I is God's Word through Hosea's marriage: revelation through heartache (1:1 -3:5). Herein is recorded: Hosea's marriage and children (1:2-9); the resto-ration of Israel and Judah (1:10- 11); the lesson that Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea is symbolic of Israel's unfaithfulness to God (2:1 -23); and the moral that Hosea's love for Gomer illustrates God's love for Israel (3:1 -5). Part II is God's Word through Hosea's messages: revelation through proclamation (4:1-14:9). Herein is recorded the Lord's controversy with His people (4:1-9-.9); a historical retrospect and Israel's current crisis (9:10- 12:14); and the ways of life and death (13:1-14:9).

When Hosea wrote, the times were turbulent. It was the last years of the reign of Jeroboam II; the Indian summer of Israel's history was fast passing into the winter of her discontent. After Jeroboam came a period of anarchy, assassinations, and confusion. In quick succession Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea came to the throne, and all but the last came by slaying his predecessor. Confusion in the nation reflects the confusion in Hosea's own home. Sin is everywhere. "There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (Hos. 4:2 ASV),

That is the fertile field of ripened fruit from which our text is taken. "For it is time to seek the

LORD" (10:12). These words are no random saying out of touch with the main line of the Book's thinking. This was the heart of God's appeal to Israel; and it is God's appeal to us. If the seedtime is far spent, the farmer sows his grain with more diligence. Seeking the Lord is the privilege of every day, but there are special seasons, when by His providence and grace, it is, in a peculiar and urgent manner, time to seek Him. How potent is this text against the dark background of Hosea's day! How pertinent today! "Time to seek the Lord"? Indeed it is!

I. For whom is it time to seek the Lord?

It is time to seek the Lord:

A. *In the councils of the world where the representatives of nations meet.* Only God can transform the United Nations organization from its international weakness into a potent factor for peace. But until now He has been left outside. His name is not in the charter, His name is not mentioned in its deliberations.

B. *In the parliaments and congresses where the fate of the people hangs in the balance.* What responsibility these lawmakers have! Do we pray for them'?

C. *In the high councils of our own government.* Nothing is more shocking than the news of corruption and double-dealing coming out of Washington, unless it is the failure of people in general to be shocked by it. A book on the Civil War, *Reveille in Washington*, published several years ago, made the point convincingly that had our government in Washington not been so corrupt at the time, the South would have been overwhelmed in six months. What if we should become involved in a war today?

D. *In our own communities.* A pastor said he felt good about his own rapidly growing Sunday school. Then he totaled the attendance of all the Sunday schools in town and subtracted that number from the total population of his city to discover how many were not in anybody's Sunday school. It was a sobering discovery.

E. *In our churches.* The indifference, the lack of enlistment, the few who are being won outside the families of our own members, the failure to train leaders—all this is appalling. Our failure to train leaders a generation ago is being reaped in a lack of leaders now.

F. *In our own hearts.* Our hearts are cold. Our minds are divided. Our hands are idle. Dutifully, though not joyfully, we haul these respectable carcasses of ours to the church building and plunk them down in our chosen places in a sparsely-filled auditorium like some huge walk-in refrigerator—and what happens'? Nothing!

Unsaved friend, it is time that you seek the Lord. Now is the time! Now!

II. **Why is it time to seek the Lord?**

Why should we be urgent? Why should the Christian's witness be urgent in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2 ASV)? Why should the unsaved person "give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply [he] drift away from them?" (Heb. 2:1).

This is the time to seek the Lord because:

A. *The time for sowing is passing, the harvest time is coming.* And what shall the harvest be? It all depends upon whether we seek the Lord or not. Here is our exact image: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hos. 10:12). We are already beginning to see the harvest of a totally secular education. We are already seeing the harvest of a whole generation of teaching by pornographic movies, "shoot-em-up" TV programs, lewd comic books, and licentious magazines. It is time to seek the Lord, and to keep on seeking until He comes and rains righteousness upon us.

B. *The time when we may seek the Lord will end.* The owner of a fig tree had sought fruit for three years, but to no avail. His patience ended, he said to the vinedresser, "Cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground?" (Luke 13:7 ASV) . And why didn't they cut it down? Because of the vinedresser's plea: "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down" (Luke 13:8-9 ASV). The day of grace for the fruitless tree was a year. The point is that every period of grace has an end. The time when one may seek the Lord will end.

C. *The results are immediate and eternal.* Those who accept Christ as Savior are not going to receive eternal life out yonder some day-, they have already received it. For the Christian, eternal life has already begun.

Conclusion. Does someone ask: "How can I be sure"? How may I know?"

A. *This is the plain and urgent word of the Scriptures.* "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2 ASV).

B. *This is the confirmation of our own observation.* Who does not know someone who delayed too long to seek the Lord?

C. *This is the inward testimony of our own conscience.* Is not your own heart repeating the words of the psalmist: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee"? (,Ps. 39:7).

