

**Message #13****Hosea 11:1-12**

As we have journeyed through the first ten chapters of Hosea, we have seen a theme which has been primarily the persistent disobedience of God's people leads to the authorized punishment of God. But now as we come to the final four chapters of Hosea, we see a most amazing series of chapters that all focus in one way or another on the unconditional love of God for His people.

Unconditional love is hard to define. **The simplest definition would be that unconditional love is a love that is given without any conditions.** It is not more or less influenced by anything or anyone. Unconditional love is not regulated by anything. In other words, God simply chooses to love an object regardless of what it is or does. In unconditional love God sovereignly chooses to love someone or something without any strings attached.

Now in all reality, Hosea is the great prophet of unconditional love. He chose to love Gomer when there was nothing about Gomer worth loving. God made him marry an unfaithful harlot to illustrate a point about Him and Israel.

Now we must admit that as we have gone through this book of Hosea to this point, there is nothing we have seen that would merit the love of God. In fact, we have seen plenty that has merited the anger of God and the hate of God. So when we come to the final chapters of the book of Hosea and God says, "Because I love you, I am going to do wonderful things for you," we know this is certainly not what is deserved.

In Hosea 11 what we see is this:

**IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT GOD'S PEOPLE KEEP TURNING AWAY FROM HIM TIME AND TIME AGAIN, HE WILL NOT GIVE THEM UP AND WILL ULTIMATELY BRING THEM INTO A WONDERFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM BECAUSE HE LOVES THEM.**

As God's people, we at times are real mess-ups. Our entire relationship with God is based on His grace. We do not deserve the forgiveness of God. We do not deserve the love of God. We do not deserve the blessings of God. God says this is what I am going to do for you regardless of this reality. God says you have turned away from me as an adulterer time and time again and yet I will love you anyway. You have failed me and sinned against Me and yet I will love you anyway. You have refused to get serious about Me and My Word and yet I will love you anyway. That is unconditional love and that is the love that is developed in the final chapters of the book of Hosea.

Now as we look at this chapter there are some key critical points God wants to make. It appears as though God is debating with Himself about what to do with His own people because they are such a mess:

**CRITICAL POINT #1** – God loved His people and called His people into a relationship with Him. **11:1**

Now to start off the process, God reminds His people that when the relationship first began, He loved them. **God's love is the motive of salvation. It is what motivated Him to save Israel and it motivated Him to save any of us.** Now the way that the love of God actually worked itself out was in the fact that God chose them. We often bring out the fact that Biblical love is much more a volitional choice rather than an emotional feeling. God loved Israel and He chose her to be His own nation and family. At the end of **verse 1**, God reminds Israel that He called Israel His son.

Now Matthew actually quotes this verse from Hosea and said that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of it (Matt. 2:15). Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the love of God. Just as God called Israel out of Egypt, so in the early days of the Son of God He called Jesus out of Egypt because Joseph and Mary fled there because Herod wanted to kill Him. The greatest display of the love of God is seen in the fact that God let His Son Jesus Christ come to this world to pay the entire redemptive price for Israel and for the whole world.

Now by virtue of the fact that Matthew quotes this verse from Hosea, we have a legitimate right to conclude that God loves Israel as He does His own Son, Jesus Christ. Now let that sink in for a moment. Jesus Christ was the Perfect Son of God who never sinned. Israel was a national mess who always sinned. We aren't much better and yet God loves His family.

**CRITICAL POINT #2** – When God's men called to them, God's people went away from them. **11:2**

When you are a father and your wife puts a baby son in your arms, it does something to you. You have a sense of responsibility and you hope you are up to the task. You have high hopes and big dreams for your son. God was the same way. He loved His son and had such high hopes for Israel. But Israel got way off track. In fact, she did just the opposite of what God wanted her to do.

What is described here is horrible. God loved His people and then He called out to His people by giving them His Word through prophets and teachers so He could point them in the true safe ways of life; but the more they were taught the truth, the farther away from the truth they drifted. They kept being lured into Baal worship. Instead of responding to the Father who loved them, they listened to evil people who lured them away from a wonderful relationship with Him.

**CRITICAL POINT #3** – God's people did not know and acknowledge all God had done for them. **11:3-4**

There are six key realities that God specifically wanted His people to know that apparently His people had forgotten:

**Reality #1** - God taught His people to walk. **11:3a**

What is pictured here is a father helping his little child to learn to walk. When you are a dad doing that, your little child is unsteady. He tends to weave and stumble, but when he starts to fall a good dad catches him so he will not fall. That is what God did for Israel. As a loving father He cared for her and taught her how to live and the direction to go.

**Reality #2** - God took His people by the arms. **11:3b**

The idea here is that God held them up and kept them steady so they would not get hurt.

**Reality #3** - God healed His people. **11:3c**

When His people failed, He forgave them and healed the relationship. He mended them completely.

**Reality #4** - God led His people. **11:4a**

God loved His people and led His people. God did not force Himself upon His people, He lovingly led them.

**Reality #5** - God lifted His people. **11:4b**

God lifts the yoke off His people. He lifts from us the yoke of the Law. He lifts from us the yoke of guilt and sin. He lifts from us the yoke of worry and doubt.

Charles Spurgeon told the story of a time when he said a minister had been invited to the home of a young couple who had a young son. When the minister arrived, the young son was playing on the floor and the father said to the minister, "Isn't it nice to be a young child? You don't have a care in the world. You can just play and enjoy life and your father and mother will take care of everything for you."

Now think about that. We are the children of God and if a little child of a sinful parent can count on that parent to take good care if it, don't you think we can count on God to take care of us? He has more power to care for us than any earthly parent.

**Reality #6** - God fed His people. **11:4c**

Now this has both physical and spiritual implications. God does see to it that His people have food to eat. But more than just physical food, God sees to it that His people are fed His Word and doctrines.

**CRITICAL POINT #4** – God's people refuse to return to a proper relationship with God so God will chastise them. **11:5-6**

Because of this fact that they will not return to God, they need to know some facts:

**Fact #1** - God will let His people be taken captive by enemies. **11:5**

This is how fickle God's people can be. They would head right back to Egypt rather than pursue a relationship with God who has done so much for them. But God says I will not let you be taken captive again by Egypt, but I will let you be dominated by Assyria. In 722 B.C., the Israelites were deported to Assyria as a direct chastising punishment of God.

**Fact #2** - God will let warfare dominate them and consume them. **11:6**

God would let enemy soldiers to attack and demolish their cities. No matter how secure the cities appeared to be, God would let enemies have the upper hand against His own people.

I don't think Israel even begins to grasp how near she was to becoming extinct. She had pushed God to His limit and He was actually toying with the idea of total annihilation. Why didn't He do it? He had a right. The answer is because of His love.

But what we see here is that God does practice tough love. Sometimes the most loving thing a parent can do is to let the rebellious child experience all of the negatives of his rebellion. Sometimes the best thing a parent can do is let the child sit in jail or live at the mission or slop around in the world so they will hopefully learn a lesson, which is I have wandered far away from what my dad wanted for me.

**CRITICAL POINT #5** – God's people turn away from God and do not exalt God. **11:7**

The bent of the people of God is to turn away from God. The bent of God's people was to abandon God. God says so when they call on Me for help, I will not help them because none of My people exalt Me. These people acknowledge that God is the "most High" God, but God will not answer them because they will not deal with sin.

The potential of turning away from God and His Word is a real threat to the people of God. In fact, this is what God's people have a habit of doing. They have a habit of turning away from God. Now we would naturally think that when a family member mistreats such a loving and caring parent, the parent would say I am done with you. No more. You are a disaster.

**CRITICAL POINT #6** – God's love will do gracious things for His people in spite of their depravity. **11:8-11**

We come now to one of the most amazing passages of grace you will ever see. God was at a real crisis point in what He would decide to do.

Would He as God lean to His just side or His love side? Would He lean to His Holy side or His Grace side? God was agonizing over what He would do and we get the answer here.

In spite of the fact that God's people had been immoral and idolatrous, and in spite of the fact that God could legitimately destroy His people, God says there are some amazing things I am going to do for My people and some amazing things I will not do to My people.

There are seven amazing promises that God makes to His own people:

**Promise #1** - God will not give up His people. **11:8a**

In **verse 8**, God asks four rhetorical questions of which are all designed to show what God could have done but what He hasn't done.

Now Hosea starts with a first question "How can I give you up?" God can give up people. In fact, Romans 1 says there are people He does give up. But the statement in Romans 1 is giving up godless heathens who refuse to turn to Him. The statement here in Hosea is about giving up His own children.

God's own people had so sinned that He had every right to give them up. They had been so unfaithful to Him this would seem to be a logical thing to do. But the question of how can I give up My own people is not an easy one for God to answer. The answer for most of us would be easy. It is easy to give up people who don't seem to care about you. It is easy to give up family members who care about you or what is right. But God does not operate like humans.

**Promise #2** - God will not surrender His people. **11:8b**

God would let His people be taken captive as a punishment, but He would never surrender the fact that they were His people.

**Promise #3** - God will not annihilate His people like Admah and Zeboiim. **11:8c**

Admah and Zeboiim were two cities closely affiliated with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 10:19; 14:2, 8). These were cities known for immorality and God destroyed them with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23).

God is saying to His people that you have done immoral and evil things like they did in those cities, but because of My grace and My love for you, I will not destroy you like I did them.

**Promise #4** - God's heart will give all His compassions to His people. **11:8e**

When God says, "my heart is turned over within Me," what He means is that He is in deep conflict emotionally.

He is a righteous, holy God, but He is also a loving and compassionate father. God's people will never be completely given up because of the compassions of God. The heart of God loves His family.

**Promise #5** - God will not execute His fierce wrath against His people. **11:9a**

Now there are different degrees of anger when it comes to God. The particular word used here “charon” describes God’s anger that is burning so hot that it pours out God’s wrath (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 303).

God had reached a critical moment in His mind. In spite of the perverse depravity of His people, He made a judicial decision that He would not carry out His fierce wrath against Israel. God would allow His people to experience some negative chastising judgment, but He would not ever pour out His fierce wrath on His people.

**Promise #6** - God will not destroy His people. **11:9b**

Now this is a real threat because God is God. He is the Holy God and He would have every right to destroy His people.

**Verse 9** is so important to our theology. God is God; He is not a man. God is the Sovereign God and He does not operate like men operate. He does have feelings, but His feelings are perfect and even when His own people make Him angry, He still loves His people because He is God and not like a man.

As God He can choose to do whatever He wants with His family. He can choose to punish them or bless them. He can choose to forget them or forgive them. He can choose to destroy them or restore them. God is God and all options are open to Him and **for His family He chooses grace**.

**Promise #7** - God will redeem and restore His people to His blessed land. **11:10-11**

Look carefully at what God says will happen with His people. This will happen because God will cause all of these wonderful blessings to happen:

**(Restorative Blessing #1)** - God’s people will one day live their lives for God. **11:10a**

One day God’s people will walk after the Lord. They will not get sidetracked from this focus.

**(Restorative Blessing #2)** - God’s people will return to their land and be protected by the roaring Lion. **11:10b-11**

This is a reference to the fact that Jesus Christ will return as a roaring lion and His people will stream to the Promised Land. They will come “trembling from the west” and “trembling” from the south in Egypt and come from the north in Assyria.

It is interesting that God specifically begins by saying that His people will come from the west because the United States happens to be geographically located to the west of the land of Israel. Many Jews who have lived in the United States will stream back to the Promised Land.

God’s people will be brought back to her land and will be settled in her land **“declares the LORD.”** Why would God do so much for His family? The answer is unconditional love.