

# God's Character and Judgment

*Hosea*

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**Bible Text:** Hosea 5:1-15

**Preached on:** Sunday, July 3, 2011

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Well, if you would please turn to the book of Hosea chapter five and we read beginning with the first verse. We will read down to the end of the chapter.

Hear this, O priests!  
Pay attention, O house of Israel!  
Give ear, O house of the king!  
For the judgment is for you;  
for you have been a snare at Mizpah  
and a net spread upon Tabor.  
And the revolvers have gone deep into slaughter,  
but I will discipline all of them.  
I know Ephraim,  
and Israel is not hidden from me;  
for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore;  
Israel is defiled.  
Their deeds do not permit them  
to return to their God.  
For the spirit of whoredom is within them,  
and they know not the LORD.  
The pride of Israel testifies to his face;  
Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt;  
Judah also shall stumble with them.  
With their flocks and herds they shall go  
to seek the LORD,  
but they will not find him;  
he has withdrawn from them.  
They have dealt faithlessly with the LORD;  
for they have borne alien children.  
Now the new moon shall devour them with their fields.

Blow the horn in Gibeah,  
the trumpet in Ramah.  
Sound the alarm at Beth-aven;

we follow you, O Benjamin!  
Ephraim shall become a desolation  
in the day of punishment;  
among the tribes of Israel  
I make known what is sure.  
The princes of Judah have become  
like those who move the landmark;  
upon them I will pour out  
my wrath like water.  
Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,  
because he was determined to go after filth.  
But I am like a moth to Ephraim,  
and like dry rot to the house of Judah.  
When Ephraim saw his sickness,  
and Judah his wound,  
then Ephraim went to Assyria,  
and sent to the great king.  
But he is not able to cure you  
or heal your wound.  
For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,  
and like a young lion to the house of Judah.  
I, even I, will tear and go away;  
I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.  
I will return again to my place,  
until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face,  
and in their distress earnestly seek me.

Let's pray together.

*Lord, thank you for your holy Word. And now we ask your blessing upon our declaration of it. Lord, be at work in our minds and our hearts. Strengthen us, Lord, physically and mentally that we might attend to your Word carefully. Work in this hour we ask in a powerful way that our minds would be instructed and our hearts would not be unaffected before we would leave this place knowing that we have been in your presence and that we have heard from you. We ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The character of God, the attributes of the one true and living God are beautiful to those who know him. To those of us who know the Lord, to those of us who have met with God on the ground of grace, God's attributes are beautiful to us.

For example, God's commitment to justice. We think about God being a just God, absolutely holy, absolutely committed to justice. For believers that is not a reason to fear. That is a reason to celebrate.

What that means is God cannot receive us to himself apart from forgiving all of our sins. God could not, God did not take our sins and simply sweep them under a rug, act like

they had never happened. Rather, in order to receive us to himself, God had to make certain that those sins were completely, wholly atoned for. And so he gave his only Son on the cross and poured out upon his own Son the punishment that our sins deserved so that we know this morning that there is not even one single sin in our lives, not past, not present, not future that has not been completely answered for by the blood of Jesus Christ. There is no wrath left our sins because Christ suffered God's wrath for our sins and he did so in a way that completely satisfied God's requirement.

So God's justice for us is not a reason to be afraid. Rather, it is a reason to celebrate. It means that we are fully forgiven.

God's omnipotence, the fact that he is all powerful for a believer that is our comfort. That is our peace. We have been saved by the power of God. We have been delivered from the domain of darkness by the power of God and we are now kept safe by the power of God.

This is why Romans 8:31 says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us..."<sup>1</sup> What does the next statement say? "...who can be against us?"<sup>2</sup>

I mean, if God is for us, he is all powerful, who can be against us? The answer is no one. And so the omnipotence of God for the believer, for someone who stands in the grounds of grace, it is a reason for peace, not worry.

God's omniscience, the fact that God knows everything and he knows it all completely and he knows it all perfectly is for us our comfort and our peace. This means that he knows how to keep us safe. This means he knows who we are. He knows what he has done in our lives. He knows that we really love him even after we have failed miserably, royally. Because he knows everything, he knows that we love him.

You remember Peter appealed to the omniscience of Jesus when three times Christ asked Peter to affirm his love for him. And at the end of it Peter, being grieved, says to the Lord, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."<sup>3</sup>

And so there the omniscience of Christ, it was encouragement to Peter. It was reason for peace and hope.

2 Peter 2:9 says, "Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."<sup>4</sup>

God's perfect knowledge is expressed in two directions. He knows how to keep his people safe. He knows how to keep the ungodly under punishment until the day of judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> John 21:17.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Peter 2:9.

What about God's hatred of sin? What about God's absolutely commitment to righteousness? Well, for a believer, again, that is our peace, that is our hope, because despite our own ongoing sinfulness, despite the fact that the flesh still resides in us and we struggle with sin, it is in the new nature of the believer to desire righteousness, to strive for righteousness. And the Bible tells us that one day God will have us living having been completely delivered from sin, even its presence in our lives. He will have us living in a world that is full of his righteousness.

2 Peter 3:13 says, "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."<sup>5</sup>

One day we will be living in a world that is nothing but righteous.

So when you think about who God is, the fullness of his attributes, the reality of what his name is—to know the name of God is to know the sum total of his attributes—for us who have been saved, who stand on the ground of grace, God's person is beautiful to us. It is our joy, our comfort, reason for celebration.

But Hosea chapter five sounds a warning. If you have not met with God on the terms of peace that he has offered, if this morning you do not know God through faith in his Son Jesus Christ, if you do not stand on the ground of God's grace, then all of those attributes that are the peace and the comfort and the reason for celebration in the lives of his children, all those same attributes will be a reason for you to be afraid. What is to us our peace will be to those who are judged their dread. It is the same God, the same attributes. To those who stand in grace, all the reasons to be encouraged, but to those who don't stand in grace, all the reasons to be afraid. That is what he is telling us.

And, by the way, just because you say you stand on the ground of grace, it doesn't mean that you do. You see, what really matters this morning is not what you say about your relationship to Jesus Christ, but rather what Jesus Christ would say about his relationship to you. Does he really know you? Are you really his? Has your heart really been transformed by Christ, by the Spirit of God, by the grace of God? Are you really a new creature? Do you really stand in God's grace this morning, because you have come to his Son? Or are you still under the wrath of God and if you are under the wrath of God know this. The living God is a God to be afraid of. He is a God to be held in awe. This is who he is.

The prophet Amos had to deal with people who said, "Hey, we are looking forward to the day of the Lord," when they were in no position to be looking forward to the day of the Lord.

Do you know what? I am absolutely convinced there are people in our churches today who would say, "I am looking forward to the day of the Lord," who are in no position to be looking forward to the day of the Lord. They just don't realize it.

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter 3:13.

In other words, I am saying there are many people who say they know Jesus, but one day it is going to be revealed, Jesus doesn't know them. In fact, it is being revealed right now by the way they are living, by the way they are thinking, by the attitudes of their heart, by the words that come out of their mouth, by their lack of interest in the things of God. All these things are telling the truth if they are just paying attention.

Amos chapter five verse 18 says this.

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!  
Why would you have the day of the LORD?  
It is darkness, and not light,  
as if a man fled from a lion,  
and a bear met him,<sup>6</sup>

Right, that is a picture, running from a lion and you run into a bear. Saying you are running from judgment, but you meet with God in judgment.

Or like a man who:

...went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall,  
and a serpent bit him.  
Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light,  
and gloom with no brightness in it?  
“I hate, I despise your feasts,  
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them;  
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,  
I will not look upon them.  
Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.  
But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.<sup>7</sup>

You see this about all your solemn assemblies and all your sacrifices and all your songs, do you know what is glaringly absent? Righteousness. Do you know what is absent in your nation? Justice. You see, where there is true salvation there is an interest in righteousness. And it was lacking in the land of Israel and it was giving evidence that the day of the Lord for them would not be a day of blessing. It was going to be a day of judgment, no matter what they said and no matter the public demonstration of worship. The truth was being told by their heart condition and by their behavior.

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<sup>6</sup> Amos 5:18-19.

<sup>7</sup> Amos 5:19-24.

Hosea chapter five presents us with all the attributes of God exercised in judgment and it says to us: be afraid.

Now tonight we are going to come to chapter six, verses one through three and we will see the attributes of God mean hope for those who will repent. But first we need to see and be very clear about the fact there is no hope for those who won't repent. This is what he is telling us.

So this morning if you are taking notes, we are going to look at four expressions of God's character exercised in judgment. The first one is found in verses one and two. And we can state it this way: God's blind commitment to justice.

What do we learn about God in this picture of judgment? We learn that God is blindly committed to justice. What do we mean by that? We mean this, that when God judges, he is no respecter of persons. He doesn't care what your face is. He doesn't care what your reputation is. He doesn't care what other men think of you. He doesn't care what position you hold, how much money you may possess.

When the day of judgment comes, if you deserve his judgment, that is if you are not standing in grace in his Son, you will be judged no matter what position you have held just like everyone else will be judged, because God doesn't respect persons.

Verse one.

“Hear this, O priests! Pay attention, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king!”<sup>8</sup>

Do you notice? He has covered all the bases, hasn't he? In the middle, sandwiched between the priests and the king are the people. So the whole nation is going to be judged. But he singles out these two groups, the leaders in the religious realm, the king, the leader in the political realm so that whether you are talking about the nation's leadership in religion or the nation's leadership in politics or you are just talking about the common man, it makes no difference. The judgment, verse one, is for you. It is for all of you. It is for all of you. Don't imagine that because you are a priest, it won't be for you. Don't imagine that because you are the king or a member of the king's household that it won't be for you. No, it is for all of you.

“...for you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread upon Tabor.”<sup>9</sup>

Probably two areas where this false worship of the Baals had been going on. The picture is these leaders instead of rescuing the people from false worship, they have actually allowed these places to turn into a net for the feet of their people, a snare, a trap for the nation.

Verse two.

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<sup>8</sup> Hosea 5:1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

“The revolters...”

If you want to know the true nature of false worship, it is revolt against God. It is rebellion against God.

“And the revolters have gone deep into slaughter.”<sup>10</sup>

A couple of pictures may be communicated there. One is the idea that their sacrifices to the false gods, the Baals, had been multiplied. So it is like a picture of slaughter. Or it may be that these leaders, by not rescuing people leading the way and rescuing people from false teaching have actually slaughtered the people. They have led in a slaughter. And so the revolters are deep into slaughter, God says, “But I will discipline...” What are the last three words? All of them.

It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you reside. It doesn't matter what position you hold. If on the day of the Lord you stand deserving of judgment, you will be judged. The judgment is for you, for all of them. That is God's nature, beloved. That is who he is.

Do you want to know who the true God is? He is a God who is committed to justice in a blind fashion. And, by the way, when God was on earth—almost did it. Almost knocked my water over—when God was on earth in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know they recognized this about him?

Matthew 22 verse 15.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his talk. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying,  
“Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.”<sup>11</sup>

Even his enemies picked up on this about Jesus. He was not swayed by appearances. He was not influenced by face. And that is the nature of God. That is God in human flesh, because that is the nature of God, God's blind commitment to justice.

Second characteristic of God we see in judgment here, God's perfect and complete knowledge. Look at the omniscience of God exercised in judgment in verses three through five.

I know Ephraim,  
and Israel is not hidden from me;  
for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore;

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<sup>10</sup> Hosea 5:2.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 22:15-16.

Israel is defiled.  
Their deeds do not permit them  
to return to their God.  
For the spirit of whoredom is within them,  
and they know not the LORD.  
The pride of Israel testifies to his face;  
Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt;  
Judah also shall stumble with them.<sup>12</sup>

Now, I have told you. Hosea's ministry is primarily to the northern kingdom. He is the death bed prophet. He is the last one sent to the northern kingdom before Assyria comes upon them. But notice God is already sounding a warning at the same time to the southern kingdom. He is saying, "You are all going to be judged if you don't turn from your sin."

And as God is warning them about this judgment, he is unveiling his perfect knowledge of them.

"I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me."<sup>13</sup>

"I know you," God says.

....for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore;  
Israel is defiled.  
Their deeds do not permit them  
to return to their God.  
For the spirit of whoredom is within them,  
and they know not the LORD.<sup>14</sup>

What is God saying to this people about what he knows about them? Well, he knows they are a stumbling block. We saw that in verse one. They have been snare to people. They are a nation in revolt. We see that in verse two. They are spiritually defiled. We see that in verse three. That is, they have been unfaithful to God. They have played the whore. They have engaged in false worship. God sees this.

They... he knows this about them in verse four. They are unwilling to abandon their sins.

"Your deeds do not permit you," he is saying, "to return to me."

Now think about that. Your deeds do not permit you. They do not allow you to return to me. What does that mean? It means that in order to return to me, you have to abandon your sinful deeds, but you are not willing. You are not willing. You want to hold on to

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<sup>12</sup> Hosea 5:3-5.

<sup>13</sup> Hosea 5:3.

<sup>14</sup> Hosea 5:3-4.



the deeds, therefore you can't come to me. Do you see? You can't come to me until you are willing to let go of your deeds.

Can I just say this about repentance this morning? You can't return to the Lord until you are willing to let go of your sins. So if you want to hold on to your sins you have blocked the way of return to God. You can't have your sin and have the Lord, too. You must abandon your deeds to return to God. They were unwilling. God knows this about them. In fact, he knows that what is wrong is in their spirit. There is a spirit of whoredom within them. There is unfaithful heart. That is why there have been unfaithful feet. Unfaithful deeds simply reveal a wandering in the heart. These people have not loved the Lord from their hearts. Therefore, they have engaged in false worship. They are ignorant of the true God. They know not the Lord. That is the true state.

Remember we saw earlier in Hosea, they say they know the Lord. They claim they know the Lord, but the Lord says, "You don't know me. You don't know who I am. You couldn't behave the way you are, think the way you have, feel the way you have if you know who I am. You don't know me."

And then he says in verse five their pride testifies to his face, that is, to God's face. Their pride is before the Lord's face. When he looks at them, he sees pride.

God not only knows what they have done, he knows why they have done it. He knows what motivates them, a spirit of whoredom. He knows what is going on in their attitudes.

You know, we note from Jeremiah 17:9 that the heart of man is deceitful. The Bible says above all things. That is, there is nothing more deceitful than the human heart. Have you ever recognized that about us, that there is nothing more deceitful than our hearts, because men even lie about their lies, don't they? They are dishonest about their dishonesty. They turn from the Lord, they go their own way. But to hear them say it there is always some way why they have gone their own way. There is some excuse for what they have done. There is some rationalization for what has occurred. They can't just look at their sin and call it what it is. There always has to be some other reason.

Just this past week I was made aware of a man who committed adultery against his wife with another man's wife, obviously and he... when it was found out and he had to turn from it he wrote a letter to this man. The man who committed adultery with this man's wife writes a letter to this man to apologize, supposedly a confession that would include returning to God. And in the letter the man said this.

"I just want you to know I am not a womanizer."

Well, pray tell, what is that to take another man's wife? Is that not a womanizer? You see, what the man could not do is see himself for who he really is and to actually turn from that sin would be to say, "That is what I am. And apart from God's grace and the forgiveness that is found in his Son, I would perish as a womanizer."

You see, the true attitude would have been to say, "I am broken. I am undone. I have no excuse. There is no rationalization. I have played the fool. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me? I am everything the Bible says that I am."

But men can't do that, not in their sin they can't. It takes the grace of God to do that. God knows you. He knows what you are doing. He knows why you are doing it. He knows it all.

Verse three.

"I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me."<sup>15</sup>

Whatever it is you think is hidden in your life, you need to recognize this morning it is not hidden from God.

How often do people worry about what other people know? Who knows? Who has been told? Who has found out?

Listen, my friend. There is only... do you know what you need to worry about this morning? What does God know? What does he know?

Do you know what? He knows it all. He knows it all.

So God is blindly committed to justice and he has this perfect complete knowledge of what he is judging. That is why the judgment is always accurate.

Third, verse six. We see God's immanence and transcendence.

Verse six.

"With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them."<sup>16</sup>

By the way, just before we deal with the attribute of God here, do you notice something? God so knows sinners he knows how they will attempt self atonement. He is able to tell them in advance, what they are going to try to do to cure the problem and he also tells them in advance it won't work. He says, "Do you know what you are going to do? When it gets really tough, when Assyria is bearing down upon you and you can see that my judgment is coming, all the sudden you are going to come to me with herds for sacrifices. You are going to come with flocks for sacrifice. And I am telling you in advance, that despite the multiplication of these sacrifices, you won't find me."

Hypocritical worship is not ever accepted by God. But we call out to God just because we are in a pinch, but our heart is not really turned toward him. God knows the

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<sup>15</sup> Hosea 5:3.

<sup>16</sup> Hosea 5:6.

difference. He knows what is real and what isn't. And you can't muster it up and you can't make it happen. And he won't receive it.

Now notice something, first of all, about the immanence of God that we see in verse six when he says, "You are going to come to seek me, but you are not going to find me."

That reminds us, doesn't it, that God can be sought. And he can be found, that the one who has created us, who has created everything around us, though he is the creator of all, spoke it all into existence, yet he has caused it all to exist in his presence. God is omnipresent. There is not a place where God isn't.

By the way, that is different than Pantheism. We are not saying that God is everything. Rather, we are saying that God is everywhere. So we all exist. Everything exists in the presence of God. And God in his grace not only has caused everything to exist in his presence, but then he has allowed his creatures, man, to know and experience with his presence, that we can actually have fellowship with this God, that we can have a relationship with the God who made us. He can be sought and he can be known. God is knowable because he has made himself known.

You see, if God had not made himself known you couldn't know him because God is spirit. There is no way to contact God without God making himself known to you.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, the Lord speaking, " You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart."<sup>17</sup>

Amos 5:6 says, "Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel."<sup>18</sup>

Those verses tell us, "Seek the Lord."

And Jeremiah 29 says, And he can be found."

God says, "You will find me when you for me with all your heart."

If you really want to know the Lord, you will know the Lord, because God has made that promise. Seek him. You will find him when you seek him with all your heart.

So that is the immanence of God, the nearness of God. God has made himself near to us. We can know him. But also in verse six we see the transcendence of God, that God is apart from what he has created, that God is outside what he has created. He is not bound by the realm, the boundaries of that which he has created. He is outside and so that though we exist in his presence, the manifest presence of God, the experience of the presence of God can be withheld by God.

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<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 29:13.

<sup>18</sup> Amos 5:6.

It can be withdrawn by God.

Verse six, he says, “He has withdrawn from them.”<sup>19</sup>

What God’s presence is not in Israel anymore. Well, oh yeah. He is still there in terms of omnipresence, but is his presence known in terms of fellowship? Is his presence known in terms of forgiveness and enjoyment and joy and peace and comfort? No, you see, he has withdrawn from them.

One of the great evidences of sin in the human heart is the idea that we can just find God any time we want to, that we find God on our terms, that we know God when we are good and ready. The sinner imagines—there are some who imagine this at least—I will live my life my way until I am done living my life my way and then I will turn to the Lord and give him my life. I will find him when I am ready.

And I want you to understand this morning from the Word of God, you don’t find God when you are ready. You will find God on the ground of his grace when God makes himself known to you and you simply respond to his initiative. That is when you will know the Lord. Which, by the way, that is true, a true work of the Spirit of God. When you are ready because God has done a work in your heart, that is when salvation occurs.

Isaiah 55:6 says this.

Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
call upon him while he is near;  
let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.<sup>20</sup>

God says, “Look. I will pardon. I will forgive. I will have compassion upon you. But I am calling you to come now. I am here right now. I will meet with you right now and I am calling you to come, but coming will mean that you must abandon your ways and you must abandon your thoughts.”

Verse nine.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”<sup>21</sup>

“You see, I am calling you not to live your way. I am calling you to live my way. I am here and I will receive you and I will have compassion upon you and I will abundantly pardon you, but do you know what? I am telling you to come now. I am telling you to

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<sup>19</sup> Hosea 5:6.

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 55:6-7.

<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 55:9.

come while I may be found. And don't presume in your heart that you can say no to me," God would say, and find me in your own good time."

No, there will come a time in Israel's life they are going to flocks and herds, he says, in the bunches. And the sacrifices will be rejected and they won't find God, because he has withdrawn himself from them.

Can I ask you? Does your view of God include the idea that knowing him is a mercy from him, that you don't know God because you deserve to know him, but men know God when God mercifully decides that they may know him? Is that your view of God, because that is the true God? Men don't... we don't deserve in sin because of our father's sin Adam and all of our sins we don't deserve to know the Lord except in one way, to know him in judgment. But to know him in forgiveness, to know him as Father, Savior, Lord, King, that is a mercy, so that when the almighty summons you to come and be forgiven, you don't tell him, "Oh, when I am ready. When I am ready."

Do you know who you are talking to? Do you know who has summoned you?

No, you seek the Lord while he may be found, because that offer of mercy may not be there tomorrow in the same way.

So God is blindly committed to justice. God is perfect and complete in his knowledge of what he is judging. God is immanent, so he may be known. But he is also transcendent. He may not always be known. When he offers, you come.

There is a fourth thing we see in this picture of judgment, verses seven through 15. We see God's irresistible power.

If there is one word that describes God active in judgment it would be the word "power." And you see several expressions of his power.

First of all you see God's power felt in impending judgment. Verses seven through nine, in his warning you begin to feel the power of God.

"They have dealt faithlessly with the LORD; for they have borne alien children."<sup>22</sup>

That is, the result of the activity of these spiritual and political leaders is a bunch of children who don't know the Lord. The result is an idolatrous people. The result of that, verse seven is that:

"The new moon shall devour them with their fields."<sup>23</sup>

What these festivals, like a new moon festival, what should have been celebration to God in worship is now just an occasion for more judgment. It just calls for more judgment

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<sup>22</sup> Hosea 5:7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

because they are an idolatrous people. It is hypocrisy. It is a sham. It is not going to result in God blessing them and pouring out blessing on their fields. No, he is going to devour the fields.

Verse eight.

“Blow the horn in Gibeah.”<sup>24</sup>

This is a call, by the way, for battle.

“...the trumpet in Ramah. Sound the alarm in Beth-aven; we follow you, O Benjamin!”<sup>25</sup>

The picture is of the Benjamites leading out to battle. This is divine sarcasm.

God says, “Judgment is coming. It is going to come. Get this. It is going to come by the Assyrians.”

God is judging, but he is doing it through the affairs of history, what is going on in the world scene. He is going to judge his people and they can get ready for battle. He can warn them it is coming. It is not going to do them any good.

Verse nine.

“Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of punishment; among the tribes of Israel.”<sup>26</sup>

Go ahead, get ready for war. Lead out, Benjamin. You are going to be destroyed. And, by the way, notice what God says at the end of verse nine.

“I make known what is...”<sup>27</sup> What? Sure.

If God determines to destroy you, who is there to save you? If God saves you, Romans 8:31, who is there to harm you? If God is for you, who can be against you? But if God is against you, who can be for you? God’s power is felt in this impending destruction, this warning to his people.

God’s power, verses 10 and 11, is felt like a flood.

“The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hosea 5:8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Hosea 5:9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Hosea 5:10.

Right, you move the boundary markers. When? This is how dishonest people could steal land. They just moved the marker. And the leaders, the princes... now he is talking to the southern kingdom, the princes of Judah, instead of recognizing that their land really belongs to the Lord, was given to them by the Lord, they look like a bunch of thieves.

So God says, "You are going to be judged, too. I am going to pour out my wrath like water."

What does that mean? It means that when the judgment of God comes it is like a flood.

In recent days we have seen a lot of weird weather, haven't we? We have seen what it is in our own land to be without rain. And then we see pictures of other places in the country where there is this deluge of water, where there is this flooding that is occurring and things are swept away. And God pictures his judgment in both ways, a parched land or a flooded land. This is how God judges.

And this water, verse 11, is going to be their oppression, their being crushed in judgment.

Psalm 32:6 says this.

"Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him."<sup>29</sup>

You say, "Oh, I will just wait till the flood comes. I really like my sinful life the way it is. Then I will find the Lord."

Don't be so sure.

Psalm 93:1.

The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;  
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.  
Your throne is established from of old;  
you are from everlasting.  
The floods have lifted up, O LORD,  
the floods have lifted up their voice;  
the floods lift up their roaring.  
Mightier than the thunders of many waters,  
mightier than the waves of the sea,  
the LORD on high is mighty!<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Psalm 32:6.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 93:1-5.

See, he sets his King over the flood. He reigns over the flood. He is the author of the flood. He is the one to be feared in the flood. God's power is like a flood of water and it is just, what is happening, verse 11, because he was determined to go after filth.

What a picture that you would trade the living God for filth. You would trade truth for lies, you would trade purity for filth. It is just, isn't it? What God does is just. So his power is felt in his threatenings. His power is felt like a flood in judgment.

Notice his power is also felt by what he takes away, by deprivation, verse 12.

“But I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like dry rot to the house of Judah.”<sup>31</sup>

Like a moth eats away garments, like a dry rot that eats away at a foundation at a structure.

God judges not only by overwhelming, he judges just by taking away, sometimes slowly, just a slow withdrawal of blessings.

Psalm 39:11 says, “With reproofs Thou dost chasten a man for iniquity; Thou dost consume as a moth what is precious to him.”<sup>32</sup>

God judges men by taking away what they deem more valuable than God. And he just takes away what is precious to them slowly, slowly, slowly. They lose everything they have traded God for.

Isaiah 51:7.

Listen to me, you who know righteousness,  
the people in whose heart is my law;  
fear not the reproach of man,  
nor be dismayed at their revilings.  
For the moth will eat them up like a garment,  
and the worm will eat them like wool;  
but my righteousness will be forever,  
and my salvation to all generations.<sup>33</sup>

You see, we are put in this vice, aren't we, following the Lord or being accepted by men. Obeying the Lord or being liked by someone or accepted by someone, found in the good pleasure of someone. And God says, “You make the right choice. You know something. Like a moth I will eat up what they have, but my salvation is forever and ever. You follow me.”

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<sup>31</sup> Hosea 5:12.

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 39:11.

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 51:7-8.



God's power, verse 13, is like an incurable disease. When he judges it is like an incurable disease.

“When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound...”<sup>34</sup>

This is what sinful man does.

Wow, there is something wrong with me. Something is not right.

Well, what does sinful man do when he... even when recognizes there is an illness, there is a wound? What does he do? Well, do you know what the northern kingdom did? They went to the king of Assyria and tried to make a pact with him. Isn't that ironic? You are trying to make a deal with the one who is going to overthrow you. That is instead of looking to God, they looked to men. They tried to cure their wound in their own way, end of verse 13.

“But he [this king] Is not able to cure you or heal your wound.”<sup>35</sup>

See, what they didn't recognize, their real problem was not in world affairs. Their real problem was not a political one or a military one. Their real problem was a sin problem. They had to look up. We talked about this last time. We are so tempted to look horizontally when the problem is a vertical one. We have got to look up.

So God's power is felt like an incurable disease.

And then the last picture, verses 14 and 15, God's power is felt like a devouring lion.

“For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.”<sup>36</sup>

When we visited South Africa on a mission trip several years ago one of the nice things they did for us one day is they took us out into this game reserve which is basically just a bunch of land that has been left wild and I will never forget. Late one evening we drove up on a group of lions that had just killed prey and there they were covered with the blood of the victim happy as could be, panting, eyes closed. There was no delivering that victim. We weren't about to get out and try to help because it was too late.

Listen. God says, “I am going to be like a lion to you that tears.”

“I, even I, will tear and go away.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Hosea 5:13.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Hosea 5:14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

That is, I am going to go back to my lair. I am going to carry off the carcass, no one to rescue. That is what God's power is like, being given unto a lion, nobody to help you.

What is the answer for this? What is the answer? Does God in this chapter of judgment for all these attributes that you can take peace in if you are in grace, but now are a dread to you if you meet him in judgment? Does he leave us with no word of hope? Or even here do we find that a glimmer of hope?

Look at the end of chapter five.

“I will return again to my place.”<sup>38</sup> What is the next word? Until.

“...until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.”<sup>39</sup>

What is the answer? You don't want to meet with God in judgment, do you? So what is the answer? First of all, honesty. Hear the attitudes. Honesty.

“Until they acknowledge their guilt...”<sup>40</sup>

You see? You have to acknowledge your guilt, you have to acknowledge the truth about yourself. The man I talked about earlier who said, “I am not a womanizer.” It is a lie. He is a womanizer. That is the truth. Can you be truthful about your sin? You have to acknowledge your guilt?

But not only does there have to be honesty, there has to be earnestness. You have to really want to be forgiven for your guilt. You have to really want to be delivered from your sins. You have to really want to know the Lord. Do you really want to know him? Are you playing a religious game? Do you show up and say the right things or is it true of you that you really want to be free from your sin, want to be standing in God's grace because you know his Son? Is that really what you want?

Because notice, he uses these words such as, end of verse 15, “Until they earnestly seek me, seek my face earnestly seek my face.”

What does it mean to be earnest? It means you are for real. It means it is the passion of your heart. Earnestly seeking. You will find him when you seek for him that way.

So there has to be honesty. There has to be earnestness, but then also there has to be the awareness that God is willing to be merciful. He is willing to forgive.

You see, “Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hosea 5:15.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Well, what are we seeking him for? What can we expect if we seek him that way?

We will deal with this tonight. Let's just read it right now. Look at verse one, chapter six.

Come, let us return to the LORD;  
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;  
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.  
After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
that we may live before him.  
Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;  
his going out is sure as the dawn;  
he will come to us as the showers,  
as the spring rains that water the earth.<sup>42</sup>

We will talk about this tonight, but I say to you this morning, if you will turn to the Lord with a true and honest heart, we know that is the work of the Spirit of God when that happens. You turn to the Lord with a true and honest heart and you will find him in Christ Jesus. And there will be forgiveness because God gave his only Son to die for sinners like you and like me.

But if you don't meet with God on his terms, on the ground of peace that he has established, then one day you will meet with him. All those attributes, though, will not be your comfort and joy. Those attributes, then, will be to you great, fearful, dreadful judgment.

Let's bow together for prayer.

*Father in heaven, we acknowledge, Lord, we are living in a day and in a generation, even in a land where there is no fear of you, where even sometimes, Lord, in the Church we sing songs and we talk about you as if you are not to be held in awe. We thank you that you are, indeed, to those of us who know your Son, you are our Father in heaven and we thank you for the sweetness and the intimacy of that relationship. But you are our Father in heaven. And I pray, Lord, that we would retain in our thinking the understanding that we stand on holy ground. I pray for my brothers and sisters and myself. Lord, wherever there is sin in our lives that we should depart from, that we would do so, Lord, earnestly and immediately, that you would not have to discipline us, that we would heed your voice and not have to feel your rod. I also pray for anyone in this room who doesn't know you. May they this day, Lord, run to you on your terms and in your time, not presuming that they will have another day, but you have offered your terms of peace. It is found in your beloved Son. I thank you that Jesus saves and I pray that this day, this moment by faith they would turn to Christ. We ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Hosea 6:1-3.