

God's Net of Chastisement

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea, the book of Hosea, the prophet, chapter 7, verses 11 through 16. Chapter 7, verses 11 through 16. I'll be ending, finishing up this chapter here.

Let us listen attentively to the word of God, verse 11 of chapter 7 of Hosea. Ephraim also is like a silly dove without sense. They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

Wherever they go, I will spread my net on them, and I will bring them down like birds of the air. I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard. Woe to them, for they have fled from me, destruction to them, because they have transgressed against me.

Though I redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. They did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. They assembled together for grain and new wine.

They rebelled against me. Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, yet they devised evil against me. They returned, but not to the Most High.

They are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword. For the cursings of their tongue, this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Let us pray. And here, God Almighty, you give a sad description of the Old Testament church, in the time of Hosea, in which the people of God were insisting and doubling down, as we saw in the opening verses of chapter 7, and this idea continues here, but now the further theme of the chastisement, the discipline, the loving care and punishment of the Father of the Covenant is upon them. Gracious Lord, may we read this, meditate upon our own lives and the life of our church and our churches here in America, our God and Savior, as we see and have seen in our lives, the chastisement through providence, Lord.

You have guided and directed things to teach us to flee from sin, and thus we go through affliction and hardship, God, and to cling to Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Help us in this regard, we pray, by your Spirit. Amen.

So, two things are described here, continuing the theme of the earlier part of the chapter, as you heard in my prayer. Israel is still described as doubling down on their sins, but now the chastisement and the punishment of the Lord of the Covenant is brought to the fore of the text. This chastisement is described variously.

God's will spread His net over them, a picture of a net thrown upon a silly bird. He will bring them down like captured birds. Destruction shall follow them, we read.

Their leaders shall fall as well, and there will be a derision or a laughing stock in Egypt. But in fact, the verse here, in verse 12, we read actually the word chastise. I will chastise them.

So, four different places in these verses we read of discipline, both the concrete action, the consequences of chastisement, and the actual noun here describing it. The God of the Covenant is chastening the northern tribes for their sins. We don't use the word often.

This word chastisement means severe criticism, a rebuke, or a strong reprimand. But there's a second definition to this word as well, related to the first one, the effect or the instrument of that chastisement, of that strong reprimand or rebuke, corporal punishment, or a beating. The Lord, through the mouth of Hosea and other prophets, declares severe criticism, and even destruction and derision, or the consequences of God's punishment upon them.

However, the Lord does more than talk, especially when Israel is being difficult. And so, as an earthly father, he applies the board of education to the seat of understanding. I love when I heard that, I don't know, 20 years ago? I thought that was great.

I never heard that before. It's a clever wordplay to remind us kids sometimes need it. It should be done sparingly, of course, and carefully.

But the point here is to use the parallel metaphor that God is our father. And the word chastisement here, of course, includes both ideas. Instruction backed by concrete actions or discipline.

It's used in the Proverbs, for example, to describe what we need for children. They need godly instruction. They need a kind of discipline.

It doesn't have to be corporal. It can be a simple instructional. It can be other ways in getting the point across to the child, or in this case, to a nation full of children, or spiritual children.

So let's go to our text. Verses 11 through 12. Israel captured by God's net of chastisement.

Israel Captured by God's Net

Right? You see that metaphor here in verse 12? God has a net, and he describes them in verse 11 as what we would say bird brains. They're silly birds. I know our house has a growing collection of birds because our neighbors also have a growing collection of birds.

They like to build up their nests up by the roof. They're clever that way. And they hang out and make a mess and are loud in the morning and the like.

And we describe them. We see them. We're like, they're just silly.

They don't seem like they know what's going on. They flutter to and fro and can't really focus and have a plan and know what they're doing with life. That's the picture here.

They're like a silly dove without sense. Ephraim, I'll remind you again, it's the northern tribes, and it's the tribe that's the center of power, the northern tribes, ten tribes. And there's some of this is seen in what? Seeking out help from the pagans.

From Egypt to Assyria, they insisted and continued on to not depend upon the Lord, but to go out and after the heathen nations around them to protect them. Instead of going for

military aid from the Lord God, who is the nuclear power of the day in our ways, they go after men and horses and chariots of the flesh. They didn't want that.

They didn't want to return to the Lord and seek out his help. Now, there are other nations they went after as well to get assistance during their time of trouble. But these two stand out here in the text.

Egypt, in 2 Kings 17, 3, we read of King Hosea, who sought out the Egyptians for help. Assyria was one of the big guys they were afraid of. They tried to appease and buy them off.

Instead of what? Praying to the Lord God for help. I want to remind us, right? Many of you have been there on Wednesday night. We've gone through the history, the early part of Israel's history with King David, and then the division of the northern and southern tribes after Solomon, Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

And in the northern tribes with Jeroboam, they started the whole, well, not quite, but they started an offshoot of the true religion. They still talked about the Lord and Jehovah, and you'll see that in these texts. They're praying to the Lord, L-O-R-D caps, Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God.

But they mixed a lot of the pagan worship in the northern tribes. They refused to go to Jerusalem, to the temple like they were commanded to, right? So they're a sect, as it were. They were schismatic.

And yet, what are we reading here through Hosea and the other prophets? God had not forsaken them, right? They're still, in that sense, still part of the covenant, although in a large measure they had apostatized, but not such that God gave up on them. That's what I'm reminding us here. And so the Lord's chastisement, put in that context, makes a lot more sense.

It shows the great, wonderful grace and long-suffering of our Lord God in heaven for our people, our wayward people, brothers and sisters, who would go about making and trying to create, almost out of whole cloth, it seems, another religion. So, of course, we don't have the promise, go back here in the text, that God will be our nuclear power. We're not given a special revelation from a prophet saying, God will protect you.

You don't need the tanks and the armies and the nuclear powers and nuclear subs and air forces today. Well, we do. We need to use common sense, natural ways of defending ourselves and be careful about these things.

But we should still pray. We should still seek out what we need to do and do in accordance to the word of God and not be impatient and the like. The Lord's letter of chastisement, verse 12, hence the title of the sermon, but wherever they go, wherever they go as a silly dove, right, flittering to and fro, the house finches in your neighborhoods, that's what they're doing, bouncing back and forth all over the place, God's net is there to capture them.

The Lord will capture them with the net of chastisement. And so with the birds on the ground, you cast a net on it, so if it tries to fly, it won't get very high because the net's pulling them down to the ground. God has captured them and God will capture them.

They are part of his providence and he will always bring about what he desires for his people. So there in Hosea 7, 12, wherever they go and flutter around like silly doves, I will spread out my net upon them. What kind of a net? A net of chastisement.

I will chastise them. I will discipline them. I will punish them for not trusting in me and going to the pagan nations.

Wherever they go, we read in this text, this net of affliction will be upon them. The punishment of God, in other words, cannot be outrun. All the earth is his and all the inhabitants therein fulfill his will according to his eternal decrees and will bring about the punishment as needed upon the Old Testament church.

The Lord's discipline indeed is a good thing, although it's not very clear to us perhaps or the Jews at the time here, wherever they go, God is always there to throw a net upon them and do as he will to them and bring discipline upon them. What is this chastisement we read in verse 12? This discipline of the Lord. This punishment of the Father of the covenant.

We have the classical passage in Hebrews 12, 5. As you may recall, you don't have to go there. In Hebrews 12, 5 we read, And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as sons. My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him.

For whom the Lord loves, he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives. Although we read this in an individual manner, this text in Hebrews 12, we think of ourself. Clearly, God applies it not just to ourselves, but to our family and to our churches collectively, as he did here in the Old Testament era.

The Lord punishes the church as a whole, such as the American churches or the denominations therein, internally by scandal after scandal when uncovered perhaps, or externally when they're troubled by the state or businesses and they're losing the job or you're kicked out. As you recall, we have, well, maybe you don't remember. I think we brought it up for prayer time.

We have a sister church in the OPC. I think they're doing better now. But they're renting out here in the Denver, well, further north of Denver, a facility run by lesbians.

The lesbians did not like them. And they were kind of worried and they were asking for prayer. We think they're going to try to kick us out.

We're good tenants. We clean everything up. We put everything back, even their rainbows.

But you can tell they're just angry and don't like them. They're always nitpicking every little thing. That happens, whether it's externally or internally.

These are troubles and trials and tribulations as we talked about in Sunday School class. But these trials and tribulations are specifically because of their own sins here in the text. They brought it upon themselves.

And God will discipline them because he what? Loves them. My son, do not despise it. Chasten me.

The discipline, the punishment of the Lord. Nor be discouraged. For whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

And who is he chastening here but the northern tribes who refuse to worship God in Jerusalem, who have their own kingship, who worship on the high places, and have their own holy day even. They added, as you recall there in 1 Kings. And God said, I will chasten them because I what? Care for them.

Parents care for their children. And that's one way they show it. Because children, and I know all of you are a child at least once in your life, can be very stubborn and insisting on doing foolish, childish things.

And I tell you what, the younger they are, the less they respond to rational conversation and discourse. And so you are left with simply grabbing them and pulling them away at a very mere minimal. And of course at a maximal, you might actually have to use corporal punishment.

Here our God of course deals with them as men. He talks with them. The prophet is here.

He's got a long time standing ministry as you recall. He had multiple kids. So he's been around a while, for a number of years.

And he's preaching and teaching to them. So he is having discourse with them, a rational discussion. But also brings about proper punishment and discipline through his providence in their lives.

So although not all trouble and hardship equals and it is evidence therefore of punishment, of our own sins, we must not forget it does happen. And we should consider when we have trials and tribulations in our life, how much of it is because of our own sins, our own foolishness, our own omissions perhaps, or certainly commissions. Now for larger groups than your family, like an entire church, or a presbytery, or a denomination, or a collection of churches in a nation, I grant you it can be a little harder to figure out if they brattled upon themselves, or it's just part of the wickedness of the world being difficult to the church of God.

That's true. But it still should be something that we can pray about or consider. And we ought to gather the facts in these matters if it's serious enough.

Because we do and have had days of fasting, for example, and prayer and petition before God. That must mean that we made a decision in this matter before us that the trials were

going to warrant such a thing. Now the second point here, Israel cannot run or outrun God's chastisement, verses 13 to 16.

Israel Cannot run from God's Net

It is already mentioned in verse 12 here. So you can put the verse there or verse 13, as you know, multiple themes and ideas go through the same verses at times, where he says, Wherever they go, I will spread my net on them. I'm going to capture them and catch them, and they cannot flee from my providence.

But 13 and following gets more specific. Woe to them, for they have fled from me. And destruction to them, because they have transgressed against me.

So they're trying to run away, they're trying to flee, and they cannot, and God will bring woe upon them, or chastisement and punishment. Woe to those who do not submit. A parallel theme of persistent rebellion here.

So we see the expression of this doubling down of sin, especially with the violation of the first table of the law of God, worshiping Baals, worshiping Astaroth, in the name of Jehovah, as you may recall, mixing it all up. Jonah's story is an excellent example of fleeing God's punishment, as we all know. It gets our attention because of the supernatural element.

He gets swallowed by this large fish, and he gets spat back out. But here in our day and age, we don't have that. God uses ordinary means and the movement of providence of life and of history, and specifically even within our own particular lives or our families, church discipline, and even excommunication.

Those, do not forget, are part of God's tools and utensils of chastisement for his people. Not just providence, that is things that happen in our life, but specifically things that happen in life in the church. The church comes along and may bring discipline upon you, or upon your family.

That too is part of God's loving chastisement. Now it's harder, I suspect, for many American Christians, I haven't done a poll, but to see the face of people who discipline them and tell them that they are wrong, the church leadership in particular, and it gets bad enough, you go through a trial, and you tell the whole church that they have sinned, and prayerfully they've repented as well, as opposed to God chastising you through the impersonal providence of hardships of a house being burnt down, for example. I suppose that's the case, but never lose sight of the fact, brothers and sisters, that if you are in a church that loves the Lord God, and they are disciplining you, they're doing it because they do love you, and they're trying to imitate the Father above, and it's part of his plan.

It is part of what he has given us the authority to exercise. Now we may try to flee, such as from church to church, from the hand of the Lord, and people have done that, I've seen that, you've seen that I'm sure as well, but they cannot outrun the discipline of God. The American system, again, to go back to church discipline, you can be excommunicated in one church, or run off to another church, and since they don't recognize the discipline of the

other church, because we believe in independence to the nth degree in the American system, and he's like, I'm free, I'm set free, this is great, and it's not great.

God will get you one way or the other. If you are his, that punishment will follow, you will have guilt upon your conscience until you repent, if you are his. And there will be some effect in your life, because you refuse his hand of chastisement.

Fleeing despite help, we read in verses 13 to 14, 13b, if you want to break up the verses here, though I redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me, and they did not cry out to me with the heart when they wailed upon their beds, and so this verse describes their ingratitude. The Lord redeemed them, or delivered them, probably from their enemies at times, and yet they still persisted in wickedness. That's what we're reading here.

Look what God has done for you, and you're running from him, you're still doubling down on your violations of his most holy law, and they also cry out to God, we read, they have spoken lies against me, that's how they respond to his redemption, the lies of course being that, well, God is Baal, or God is Ashtoreth, or God's consort, excuse me, is Ashtoreth, is a female goddess, that's a lie, they speak lies about me, violation of the first commandment, lies about God. They did not cry out to me with their heart, when they wailed upon their bed, so here in verse 14, God redeemed them, they lie about him, and when they do repent, it's not a heartfelt repentance, it's crocodile tears. They don't cry out to God, they just cry out for being spanked.

We all know about kids who don't like being punished, but they go back and do the crime again, do the sin again, do the violation of God's will through the parents again. They insist on doing things their own way, when they do cry out for help, it's not really to God at all, because we read here, they do not cry out to me with their heart, it may either mean they don't cry out to God at all, verbally, nor with their heart, or it may mean they do cry out with their mouth, but their heart is not in it, the emphasis being upon the heart. Either way, it's wrong.

Either way, it's wrong. We continue on here, we're misusing God's blessings, verses 14b and following. They assemble together, they gather together for grain, for new wine, they're gonna celebrate and have fun, but instead of doing it for the glory of God, as they had times of celebration, as you recall, in the book of Deuteronomy, where they had this time when gathering together with all the rich and poor alike, they rebelled instead through their prosperity.

Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, yet they devised evil against me. So that's a parallel idea to verse 13b. Though I redeemed them, they turned around and lied about me.

Here, though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, that is, I gave them the abilities and gifts upon them. The idea of discipline there is not chastisement, but strengthening or giving them what they need, training them. They still use it for evil.

That's the point. They still use it for evil. They were blessed by God either militarily or prosperity in general.

We know that's one of the sub-themes of Hosea. They were prosperous, and in their prosperity, they cried to God and said, Look, we don't need to repent. We're good.

Prosperity is evidence of our obedience, of our sacrifices and worship to Baal and Ashtoreth being sufficient. They take these things and they rebelled and devised evil against me, that is, against God and his honor and his true worship and his word. They turned around and devised these things.

When we misuse the Lord's good gifts, this too, we are imitating the northern tribes here. God has blessed us and indeed he has in the American churches and America in general with much material prosperity. What have we done with it? Have we devised evil with that prosperity? Or used it for good in this time of peace and tranquility in our nation relative to, of course, times of war? What do we have? Do we use it for godly ends or for selfish ends as they did in the northern tribes here? We read in verse 15.

And then we have a false repentance here. Also again echoed in the prior verses. They did not cry out to me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds.

So we read in verse 16. They returned, but not to the most high. Looks like they're coming back to God, but they go right by him to their false gods.

We read here in particular. They're like a treacherous bow, an unstable bow, as in bow and arrow. And it's going to break on you when you pull it.

That's dangerous. Their princes shall fall by the sword. And the cursing of the tongue shall be, this shall be the derision.

And so the princes shall fall. Clearly there's a picture of leadership falling. Not just princes, but kings and anybody else in positions of authority in the northern tribes.

They were killed in particular by the sword. The loss of leadership of a business is a bad thing. The loss of leadership for our nation is devastating.

It can lead to chaos in society and therefore amongst people and their families and churches and the like. And it's not a good thing. And the same is true for churches and denominations.

Churches struggle. We had a prayer request this morning for the church and the OPC church in the Florida Keys. And they need a pastor.

It's hard. It's hard to grow when you don't have a pastor. Churches find this out.

People come here like, well, I hear the ruling elder, he might be kind of good, but he ain't a pastor. You know, I want a church that has somebody who is here to motivate and encourage me through preaching and et cetera. And without the leadership or ruling elders, and the like, it hurts the church of God.

So this is obviously a curse, a punishment, part of God's net of chastisement upon them. Take away the leadership of the nation. Take away the leadership of the churches.

That's God, perhaps in those contexts, depending on what it is, bringing discipline upon them. You have taken my blessings and you've thrown them away, so I'm going to take the blessing of good leadership away from you. Now, of course, in the northern tribes, I don't think the princes were good.

There was not a single king that was good. If you go through the chart, they have some charts that shows you good, bad, and it goes through the text and gives you the proof text showing you, you look at the list, not a single northern king was good. Not a one does the text say, well, this guy was pretty good except he was kind of weak here or weak there.

But you have that in the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, right? The tribe, the lineage of David and his sons, his grandsons, his great grandsons and the like. They had some good ones. They had some bad ones.

Well, a few good ones. A number of bad ones. Nothing like that in the northern tribes.

So here, the princes are falling, although you may be thinking, well, they're probably bad princes. I can almost guarantee it. And that's probably a good thing.

Nevertheless, you don't want chaos in society. Losing your leadership, especially back then, when they're the guys that can protect you with the army and unite the country when they're surrounded by, I don't know, Egypt, Assyria, the Philistines, they're in a hot area. Remember? Israel is a major trade route to Africa or from Africa, Ethiopia and the like, up to Asia, Eurasia.

You lose your leadership, that's very dangerous. And so it's a double whammy. You already have bad princes.

I'm gonna take away your bad princes. You got nothing now. Here, secondly, public humility.

For the cursings of their tongue, this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt. Egypt shall laugh and mock them. Because the other countries are watching, brothers and sisters, back then, and the unbelievers are watching us today as churches, as families, as those who name the name of Jesus Christ.

There, here, they see Israel failing time and time again. Their entanglements with foreign pacts would be known by the other nations as a general rule, especially when the war starts out. You find out who's on whose side, who fulfilled their pact, their contract, their covenant.

Northern tribes had many wars and skirmishes over their lifetime up to seven, what is it, 22 when Samaria falls, the northern capital. And so they lost these skirmishes and battles. They kept losing lands.

They were slowly being devoured until Assyria devoured them. And Egypt sees this and laughs at them. Back then, do not forget, the gods were tied to the nations.

And if your nation won a battle, that meant your god was better. So the northern tribes are losing left and right and they're just laughing at Jehovah and at them, of course. Now, the parallel today is the American churches are humiliated and mocked when we rely upon obvious falsehoods or turn a blind eye to corrupt pastors.

We can all feel it. We all see it. We feel a little embarrassed ourselves, especially when we can't do much about it.

It's another denomination, some independent church somewhere. All we can do is pray, pray for our own, pray for ourselves and our churches that we not fall and be a scandal to the world and an embarrassment to our Lord and Savior and watch out for our sins. But it happens today, although the connection between the church and state is a little different, of course, compared to back then.

People don't think of it that way. But they still watch us and say, what kind of a God do you have that has this kind of a scandalous church that you guys were claiming to be holy? What in the world is going on here? Why do you put up with these kind of hooglums that call themselves pastors? I've seen pastors not only in Colorado but other places that come back into the pulpit after massive scandals. They may be repentant but they should not go back into the pulpit any more than you want a politician who's gone through serious scandals go back and do politicking.

You're done. You can be a private citizen. You're fined.

You're forgiven. But there are consequences. And the church must do the same thing.

I want to remind us then what we see here is God using the pagan nations to bring them what? To embarrassment and shame. Shame is a good tool when used right. We ought to have shame and believe in shame.

Public humiliation and embarrassment. Churches should use it more often because it's better than the alternative which is excommunication when the sin gets bad enough and not dealt with. It's a minor way of pushing back people down the path of holiness.

It's collective peer pressure. Remember hearing about peer pressure when I was a teenager in the high school and whatnot? And I learned real early on real quick you can't escape peer pressure. The question is will it be good peer pressure or bad peer pressure? Godly or righteous peer pressure? And shame godly shame is good godly peer pressure saying you watch what? You read what? You listen to what? You've been doing what? And the person's kind of mumbling then you see they're shameful they're embarrassed and that's a good thing.

Now we don't want the world of course we don't want to be ashamed to the world but with respect to ourselves and with each other to use good godly shame. God disciplines us for our sins. That's what we're reading here.

The sins of his people of the Old Testament the northern tribes in particular but I want to remind us that when he disciplines us for our sins when he chastises us when he throws his net of affliction and punishment upon us it is not to justify us. We are always justified by faith in Christ and by grace alone. By faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone.

But to purify and sanctify us to make us more holy that's its purpose. It is a matter of further sanctification of growth in grace. And it's the hard process of mortification or killing sin and disobedience to his word.

Therefore if we are his we should submit to the mighty hand of God in Christ when we have sinned and we brought shame upon ourselves and we brought the piercing blows of discipline because we've continued on in gluttony we've continued on in avarice in greed or whatever the case is that we went over this morning and say yes Lord I deserve this punishment. Help me repent and learn your law Psalm 119, 71 and 69 and to continue on in holiness. And how do we escape the chastisement of the Lord however? Because that is a question and is it a fair question? Should I? And yes you should.

The psalmist talks about it when you cry out to God for mercy and ask for help. This is acceptable and this is fine. The way the first thing you do is by submitting to the Lord.

You submit to the chastisement and part of submission therefore is what? An expression of repentance. Repentance says I am wrong. What I did was wrong and I accept the consequences.

The stories you read of Christians that is converts in prison who have become Christians and they say I deserve to be here. That's hard to say but that's a very graphic picture of repentance. I did the wrong.

I deserve the consequences of it. Now you can ask for clemency. Sure.

You don't get it? Okay. If you're bitter then you've got some evidence that repentance wasn't real. But there are stories like this and we see the saints of old the same way.

They acknowledge their sin. They cry out to God. David did this.

He kept asking for mercy for his son who would not die in infancy and God finally took the child away and he was done. What more could he do? He accepted God's chastisement by taking his son. And so we are called to do the same thing.

Not just yes I sinned but yes I sinned and I accept the punishment. But what are we doing with chastise? There are at least two things we can do. One negative and one positive.

One negative is don't make it worse. Don't double down on your sins. That's what the northern tribes have been doing.

They're trying to run away from God's providence that is his net of affliction and chastisement upon them. Secondly, more positively plead for leniency. Oh Lord do not rebuke me in your wrath do not chasten me in your hot displeasure.

Psalm 38 is an entire prayer of chastisement. Go back to Psalm 38. So you can ask for leniency.

Ask for less discipline because our Heavenly Father above loves us. Our God cares for us. And as parents have brought discipline upon their kids and then later adjust that discipline but it's still there.

Enlighten the load upon the child. So our Heavenly Father does the same thing. And David here pleads.

Pleas with God. Says please God Almighty take it away from me. Give me less.

Don't rebuke me. Don't take me out with your chastisement and your hot displeasure. Don't ever give up on your prayers therefore.

David murdered and committed adultery and had every reason to stay away from God. But he cried and he fasted and he cried out to the Lord God day and night until his child passed away. And you must do the same thing if need be.

May we all examine our lives our families and our churches brothers and sisters. Flee the bad example of Israel and do not be a silly bird. But rather when chastened because of your sins you should submit to that net that the Lord has cast upon you because he loves you.

Let us pray. Our Father above help us we pray to cling to you to flee and repent of our sins Lord whatever they may be and to whatever degree that they are in our lives. And Lord as we live under your hand of chastisement God may we not double down may we not run away from you but God accept our punishment accept the net you've thrown upon us for we've acted like silly doves our Lord and may we bring be brought by your spirit back to our senses God almighty and continue down the path of holiness by the blood of Christ we pray Amen.