

Ephraim's Wickedness Severely Judged

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea chapter 9. Hosea chapter 9, verses 11 and following to the end of the chapter. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Hosea chapter 9, verses 11 and following.

As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird. No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception. Though they bring up their children, yet I will breathe them to the last man.

Yes, woe to them when I depart from them. Just as I saw Ephraim like tyre planted in a pleasant place, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer. Give them, O Lord.

What will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and a dry breast. All their wickedness is in Gilgal. For there I hated them because of the evil of their deeds.

I will drive them from my house. I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious.

Ephraim is stricken. Their root is dried up. They shall bear no fruit.

Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb. My God will cast them away because they did not obey Him, and they shall be wanderers among the nations. Let us pray.

In these strong and this stern judgment, God, upon the wickedness of Ephraim, of those who've been warned over and over again, who knew better, whose great-great-grandparents, God, were told these things, and they refused to pass down this truth, but they heard it anyways from the mouth of one prophet after another, generation after generation, God Almighty, from before the division to after the division of the northern and the southern tribes. And thus, God, you had every reason in the world to bring great judgment upon them even earlier, and yet you held it off generation after generation because of your compassion and care and consideration for your people. And thus we see, Lord, how you use the judgment here, we pray, God, to bring us to our senses if need be, and certainly that you did that back then, for there were surely some who were elect, as the prophet himself was, amongst the people of God.

Father, we ask that we would see beyond our emotions of the severity of the judgment here, to see the truth of it and the justice therein, that you are a just God and you use judgment for the good of the church and to vindicate your name. May we learn and submit to this truth in our lives. Amen.

In these verses, we read of more punishment upon the wayward northern tribes. Such punishment has to bring dread and fear. The other judgments, Hosea warned about, now move to something more personal, judgment upon the rising generation.

If people are punished themselves, they may cry out for mercy for their own children, although they would not cry out for mercy for themselves. The point of the Lord's penalty, of course, for their sins was twofold, at the very least, justice and the call to repent. The judgments threatened upon them was to show that the Lord God of the covenant will

uphold his law, but it will also be there to bring them to the end of themselves, to bring them to repentance, to turn away from their wicked lifestyle.

Both purposes are seen throughout the book of Hosea. In this section, in these chapters, in fact, we read much of the promised discipline and judgment upon the ten northern tribes. They are given by the God of the covenant to bring them to the end of themselves.

Hardened hearts require hammers, and theirs was a generational hardness, with the children growing up in increasingly pagan teachings and practices, it appears. And even so, it still holds lessons for us today, brothers and sisters, that our loving God uses the discipline of hardships to bring us to repentance. And so I have this divided up in these points here, the three points.

Ephraim's Glory Flies Away

The first one is Ephraim's glory flies away, using the language of the text, verse 11 and following. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away, flutter away like a bird, we say today. The glory is gone.

Ephraim, representing the northern tribes, as the hub of leadership and wickedness in the northern tribes, will lose its glory for their ongoing generational sins and wickedness that we saw through various chapters here, now in chapter 9. What was that glory? It means something good, the blessings, what they could pride themselves in, something along those lines. Probably prosperity. Hosea 10, 1, we read, Israel empties his vine, he brings forth fruit for himself.

According to the multitude of his fruit, he has increased the altars. According to the bounty of his land, they have embellished his sacred pillars. So with that bounty, the great blessings God in his providence gave them, they used it to make more false worship, increase the altars.

So clearly they were using their prosperity for wickedness. God had blessed them and they had misused that blessing. Hosea 2, 8, for she did not know that I gave her grain, the Lord cries, new wine and oil and multiplied her silver and gold.

And instead, we read, they honor Baal, there in Hosea 2, 8. And so that's clearly one of the major concerns and themes in the book of Hosea, that they're prosperous and that prosperity was used instead of glorifying God and being humbled by such goodness bestowed upon them. In turn, they went back further and further into Baal worship. Perhaps also resting on their laurels, as one commentator suggests, that is, they were happy with their own past, that they did marvelous and glorious things, as one commentator described it this way.

For much of their history, the north was more prominent than the south, the ten tribes versus the southern two tribes, dominating client states such as the Ammon and Moab repeatedly and enjoying relative military success, even against Assyria at Qaqar in 853, not long ago from the timetable here of Hosea. So, from that perspective, it partly explains, I

suppose, their insistence on making national pacts with the pagans, right, when they should be trusting in the Lord God of the covenant instead. And there was probably other glory as well in their culture and in their society, and I think it's also the glory in their fertility rites.

And I believe that twofold, one, from the prior text in Hosea 4, which I'll read, and, of course, this text, God often punishes the very thing that we glory in and exalt ourselves and have pride in. Either takes it away or, on the flip side, gives us so much of it, we just, you know, get abused by it and suffer accordingly. Hosea 4.14, to remind you of how bad things were there in the northern tribes, we read Hosea telling them, I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your brides when they commit adultery, for the men themselves go apart with harlots and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot.

Therefore, people who do not understand will be trampled. They mixed it up with religion. It's absolutely astounding.

The pagans did this, and here we have the northern tribes of the Jewish nation doing this themselves. And we know these were fertility rites, and I don't think I need to go into details of that. They think it's going to give them blessing in society and much rain and moisture and lots of fruit.

Now, our own country, of course, has our own glory, as it were, our own pride, our own history. There's a good glory and a bad glory in the sense of it's good to feel satisfaction and a job well done, for example. We may use the word pride for that, and I'm not going to critique you for using that word.

It's not necessarily wrong if we understand appropriately. It's just a job well done, and God blessed me, and I'm glad I was able to do this. This is a good thing.

And, of course, there is the pride that we typically think of as just, look at me. Look how wonderful we are as a nation. Look, we can do no wrong is the worst variation of it.

I grew up learning about patriotism. I think I mentioned this before, and I was also taught about the dangers of jingoism, or patriotism on steroids, they would call it. I don't think we have that language anymore today.

We don't even talk that way. It's just, you're a patriot. You must be a crazy white supremacist.

No, no, there's jingoism, going too far. My nation could do no wrong. That's the wrong kind of glory and pride.

Our history, of course, is a history of the Lord's blessing us, especially in early America. And it's a great thing to go over, and we'll see some of that in Sunday School class as we go over the history of the church. But if we look at it as an unbeliever from their perspective, of course, you're going to see much misplaced pride.

They're going to think it's them. Look how great and marvelous we are, and God has no glory in these things. And our collective glory as a nation, of course, is fleeting, just like the

northern tribes, to the extent that we follow down wickedness ourselves, as individuals or as churches.

The churches themselves can have, as it were, too much glory, too much pride in who we are, even our own tradition, of course, as much as we teach about the depravity of man. Let's not forget it's the struggle that we have. We, too, are sinners, and we, too, can struggle with the wrong kind of glory and making excuses for our sins as churches, both as denominations and as particular churches.

Specifically here, we read of what's going to happen to them, verses 11 through 14. That is, specifically, their glory shall fly away like a bird. What's going to fly away like the bird? Their glory, but more than that, no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception.

That's why I think that's part of their pride there. Our look at us and our large families, perhaps, or our fertility rights, or whatever else it is in this case may be, it's going to fly away. That glory, that wonderfulness, because having children is a wonderful thing, will be taken from them.

They cannot continue as a nation, of course, so whatever that glory may be, without the next generation, it's just going to disappear. It's as simple as that. This will certainly curb their pride.

No children born, and those who are born to them will be lost, we read, in the next section there, though they bring up their children. Yes, I will breathe them to the last man. They're going to lose their kids.

They're going to lose the next generation, even to the murdering of them, just as I saw Ephraim like tyre planted in the pleasant place. So Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer. They're going to be willfully doing this, perhaps, again, in Moloch sacrifices, and abortion, as we have in the American scene, of course, and the like.

Whatever that is, in particular, or as one commentator suggests, perhaps, during a siege. You know, some of the curses brought upon them during the siege, of eating their own, a terrifying picture to behold. And all this, it's a picture of great wall, the opposite of glory, but of mourning and of loss of a new generation.

Verse 14, the prophet seeing the great plagues of God toward Ephraim, Geneva Notes explains to us, prays to God to make them barren rather than that this great slaughter should come upon their children. So in verse 14, it's interesting. We read, Give them, O Lord, Lord God of the covenant, L-O-R-D, all caps.

What will you give? The prophet Hosea says, Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. Some think it's a curse. The older commentators think it's a plea of Hosea, basically saying, don't even bother giving them kids because the curse is going to be so bad for them, the judgment upon them.

It's a sad prayer. In other words, be better not to be born. I want to tie this to Deuteronomy.

In the book of Deuteronomy, as you recall, you have a list of curses, right? The Mosaic Covenant was formalized there with the blessings and cursings finishing up that book of Deuteronomy, and chapter 28 has that long list of curses, although other curses are mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament with respect to the Mosaic economy. Chapter 8, the longest list that we have, the most detailed list of curses for breaking the covenant, and we know, boy howdy, did Hosea show us over and over again how much Ephraim and the northern tribes broke the covenant of God. That's how the chapter of the book starts out with chapter 1, 2, and 3. I married this woman, married Gomar.

They're unfaithful. You're like my unfaithful wife, and you have these kids, you have these cursed kids because you are just playing around all the time and not taking my covenant seriously. Many of those curses, if you go through and categorize them, and I try to do that, and I'm not an expert in all these, so much of the Bible, I'm trying to find some stuff, professionals, as it were, who put this together somehow, but what I see is a lot of foreigners involved, winning battles, foreigners invading them, foreigners ruling over them, and even taking their children.

And I highlight this because here, as we know, Hosea tells them, you're going to be invaded. Syria is coming or has come. Now it's going to be the Assyrians, with an A. The children part fits these verses.

Deuteronomy 28, 41, we read, You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity. You're going to raise them up, kind of what we read here, verse 12. They bring up their children, yet I will bereave them to the last man.

Being bereaved of them doesn't necessarily mean they're going to die in that verse, just that you're going to lose them, and you're going to be sad about it. And Deuteronomy 28, 41 fits that very curse. They were warned about, and yet they ignored them anyways.

Going in captivity in practice, of course, would often, I think, be a death sentence for many, especially young people and sick and the like, because they would have forced travel, forced marches. Or many of them would be separated during the chaos of war, and just simply lose them during a siege. Deuteronomy 28, 61 is another description of a curse upon them for violating the Mosaic covenant.

And also, every sickness and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee until thou be destroyed, which is to say, I have many more other curses upon you that's not listed here. And I find it interesting that the word there for plague, some translations you'll read is the word affliction, which is obviously a broader word than plague. Plague is very specific, it's some kind of sickness.

A plague can be an affliction, but not all afflictions are plagues. I think it's probably that word, it can be used that way in other uses of the Old Testament, for example. I can see why they may want to use the word plague here, because it just mentions sickness.

But surely God can use and has done all kinds of curses and punishments anyways. I don't think the list is exhaustive. It literally says that here with respect to sickness, even if we take it as sickness, God's saying there's more to come.

Now, what's also interesting is in the Song of Moses, as you recall, in Deuteronomy 32. So at the very end of Deuteronomy, we have this long Song of Moses. But in the midst of the Song of Moses is some bad news.

Verse 25, "...the sword shall destroy outside, there shall be terror within, for the young man and virgin, their nursing child with the man of gray hairs." It doesn't matter. They're all going to be punished one way or the other for flippant, brazen, presumptuous violations of God's holy word. "...to whom much is given, much is required." And the amount of judgment we read in just these verses shows us how much they knew and how much they willfully ignored and turned away from the Lord God.

Don't lose sight of that fact. Because often what we read in the Bible is, as it were, one side. We just read the judgments.

We don't read explicitly everything they did. It's kind of like, as it were, on the side. It pops up, as you see here, and not a lot of emphasis.

A lot of it is just, stop it. This is wicked. But the other side is they're doing this willfully from their perspective.

We were going to their shoes and say, well, I hear Hosea, I hear Elijah. I heard, you know, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and others. Some of them were northern exclusively.

Others went to the north and the south for judgment and warnings. And they heard them. There were other prophets.

As you recall, during the times of Elijah and Elisha, God's like, I got 700 guys. I've not bowed the knee. And this servant of the king was hiding, what was that, 150 or 200 in each cave.

And they were prophets he was hiding, not just godly men. So there were many more prophets than the ones we have, brothers and sisters. God did not leave them in ignorance.

He would not do that. They were very knowledgeable, but they did not care. The curses are punishment, of course.

And in the Old Testament, they had a special relationship of the Mosaic economy and of the land and of Jewishness that wasn't there before the Mosaic nor after the Mosaic. Right before the Mosaic, you could be a chosen of God and not be Jewish. Noah comes to mind, and he predates Abraham, and God literally made Jews.

He said, Abraham, you're going to make the Jewish race. Which should tell you that God's going to take it away when he wants. It's what he built.

But the Mosaic covenant, or what we call the Mosaic economy sometimes, the way God applies the covenant of grace, that's what an economy is, is an old use of that word. There during this time, the time of Moses to the time of Christ, was unique to show of Jesus, of course, as we know through the whole ceremonial system and the like, and the topology of

the land itself, and of even King David, who was a type of Christ as king. All that had a special function that's now done away with.

That's why it was there. So that's that superstructure. But that is built upon a more basic relationship, a twofold relationship.

One is a natural relationship of the Creator and the creation. We being the creation, that which is created, our submission to God is supposed to submit to our Creator. We always have that relationship.

And then as well as the supernatural covenantal relationship with the covenant of grace. Grace and grace abundant was clearly in the covenant of Moses. That's why it's considered historically in our theology to be but one of many subsets.

I'm thinking mathematically, but you know, one of many applications of the covenant of grace over time. The first being Abrahamic or Noahic even, Abrahamic, Moses, and now the New Testament era, all under the umbrella of the covenant of grace, administered a little differently in each age. Today's punishment.

Yes, I think it's still for us. That is, properly speaking or formally, you would say, it's the Mosaic era. We're not under Moses.

That's true. We don't have priests. That's true.

But we don't lose sight of the fact that the Mosaic economy did not nullify the natural relationship that was always there in the Mosaic economy, nor the supernatural, i.e., the covenant of grace always there in the Mosaic economy. Then we can go to the Old Testament text and learn and understand and see that these things are clearly the case. God still brings judgment.

It's not just a uniquely Mosaic thing, is it? Of course not. God isn't just God, period. And the judgments that he uses in chapter 28, you recall when I went through that on Wednesday night, that priest was doing it on me almost 20 years ago, I think it was, 18 years ago.

And you'll see that most of those punishments are what I call natural. And what I mean by that is they're not supernatural. It's not like they just walked along and all of a sudden the earth opened up and swallowed people.

That kind of happened in numbers, as you recall. Now, I would call that a miracle in the sense of it's not natural, but of course, it's a judgment. We typically think of the word miracle as a good thing.

I want to have more miracles in my life. No, these are bad miracles or bad supernatural happenings. Fire from heaven consuming the enemies of God.

That's not a natural occurrence. You just don't see that coming around randomly, you know, through life. It's a volcano.

It blows up. You know where it comes from. The fire from heaven, they didn't know where it came from.

It wasn't lightning. It was literally fire. So that's supernatural or miraculous.

But most of those curses, if you read them carefully, are natural. I mean, you don't want to be invaded by foreigners. It's just a natural human response to say, hey, that's a bad thing.

I don't want that in my life. I don't want my kids being lost. I don't want my country being destroyed or my king or my leader.

Talk about a king there, of course, but any of my leaders now under the heel of someone else. We don't want that. We understand that intuitively or even naturally.

Unbelievers even recognize these things as bad things. In God's moral universe, doing evil results in bad things. That's what I mean by natural.

Some more often than others, of course, sometimes just delayed in God's providence. And of course, when you get enough people doing evil collectively, it eventually affects the entire nation itself, doesn't it? And we see this with our own lost generation. Unfortunately, the punishment that is of losing kids, losing entire generations.

There are estimates of how much we lost through abortions since the early 70s. It's astounding. Millions upon millions, tens of millions, innocent kids.

Killed for short-term prosperity. Killed for selfish reasons. And this fueled, among other things, as you can imagine, that is, other things fueled this problem that's implied in the text but very explicit in our situation today, which is the sans demic.

You've heard me mention this before. Sans demic demographics, right, of people. Not enough people.

And it's not just America. We're on the edge of it. Europe is worse.

And other parts of the world, Japan, Korea, they're what they call below replacement levels. Sadly below. You want, like, 2.1 kids.

And they're, like, at .7, I think, in Korea now. It's astounding. Within less than three generations, if things don't turn around, there will be no more Korean nation.

That's not supernatural. That's natural. And that's a natural curse, clearly.

That's a bad thing. And in a practice for our nation in the West, if there is less of a smaller group of people in the next generation, as opposed to getting larger and larger, it gets smaller and smaller. And so as you go up the vertical axis, these are aged people.

There's more old people. And as you go down, these are less young people. You have less people to be able to work for the older people.

You have less people to learn the required skill tech for high technology, skills for higher technology. And this started about 50 years ago, I think I said early 70s, about when I was born, 72, 71. For various reasons, pursuing prosperity at all costs, avoiding marriage, going for careers instead, unnecessary delay of marriage and of kids.

All this has conspired against us today. And I say it's a bad thing. It is, although not technically a curse of Deuteronomy, per se, it certainly fits it, that is, your kids are going to be gone.

In this case, you literally never had the kids, collectively as a nation. So Deuteronomy 28, I think, could still be helpful for us to remind us that these are bad things. Let us pray for our nation and our churches and let us encourage family formation.

Ephriam's Wickedness Hated

This brings us to the second point, verse 15, Ephriam's wickedness hated. God hates such wickedness, such disdain for the law of God and of his gospel, all their wickedness is in Gilgal. For there I hated them because of their evil deeds.

I will drive them from my house. I will love them no more. And all their princes are rebellious.

And Gilgal was the place of false worship. It was an ancient cult center from the very beginning of the conquest in Joshua 4 to Joshua 5. You'll read about some of that. Since the time of Amos, Amos 4 and 5, and Hosea, which we are reading now, you'll run across in chapter 4 and then in the future in chapter 12, they attack Gilgal as well.

It must have been a location for consistent false worship, not just during the time of Joshua. They did not completely eradicate, as we know elsewhere in the 12 tribes, the false worship of the natives. Gilgal represents, in other words, the ongoing secretism, right, the mixing of religious worship, more specifically or more broadly, just a mixing of religions in general, of northern worship in particular.

They were especially bad, although the southern tribe starts catching up pretty soon, unfortunately. We see that already in 2 Kings, as you recall. And so this wickedness and evil days, this language that he uses here, all their wickedness I hated because of their evil deeds.

I will drive them from my house. These are broad descriptions, which we often read in the prophets, of how bad things are, of their ongoing false worship, of their fertility rites, of the breaking up of marriage because of those fertility rites, of course. And the big picture again and again is the bold-faced breaking of the covenant of God.

That's the most wicked thing that they have done over and over again, their daring presumptuousness. Specifically, he mentions here, interestingly enough, at the end of verse 15, rebellious princes, right? Leadership, like the priests, were brought up before, chapter 4

and 6. But bad leaders bring hardship, of course, upon the people of God. If they're rebellious, it's going to affect the people themselves, either by negative example or just by bad policies.

And certainly both, I'm sure. And I think the average Jew went along with such rebellious princes. We see that in chapter 6. And so the punishment here is to drive them out.

I will drive them out. I will drive them from my house. I think by the word house, he's just referring to the land itself because the northern tribe wasn't in Jerusalem.

They didn't have Jerusalem worship. They didn't have temple worship. They had their own temple, Baal, up north, Samaria, if you recall.

And so he's going to drive them from the land, which is a picture of what? No longer having special protection from God, that they have lost the covenant and been expelled from it, ultimately. And so he describes this action of his, his punishment upon them, as a love and a hate. For there I hated them, that is their false worship in Gilgal, verse 15, and I will love them no more.

So he says it positively, I will hate them, and negatively, I will love them no more. It is probably, I think, as most commentators believe, a relative comparison. It's not an absolute hate nor an absolute lack of love.

And we have this kind of language of Christ, of course, where he says you're supposed to love the Lord and hate your family. He doesn't mean, okay, you guys are on your own, you're walking home tonight. He means in comparison to God Almighty, when the rubber hits the road, who are you going to choose? Your family who hates me and wants you to go off to their false god? Deuteronomy 13 talks about that, right? Or are you going to love me? That's what he's talking about.

And perhaps something along the lines is going on here. I think so because, again, God has his elect. God had comforted them, even though they had been wiped out, destroyed.

We know during the time of Christ, Jews still survived in the northern parts of Israel, and God had his people among them. There were lots of converts among, maybe some of them came from the northern tribes. We don't really know for a fact, but God has indeed been and was merciful to them for a very, very long time.

Ephraim's Fruit Dried Up

Now, lastly, then, we have Ephraim's fruit dried up, verses 16 to 17. This is kind of interesting because Ephraim's original blessing, given to him in Genesis 41, right? All the sons were given blessings. The fathers of the future tribes there, right, in Egypt.

And Ephraim's blessing was to be doubly fruitful. So you see the connection now? Ephraim is stricken. Their root is dried up.

They shall bear no fruit. Forget being doubly fruitful. You won't even be fruitful at all.

So the blessing has now turned into a curse upon them, in Genesis 41, 52, and even Deuteronomy 28, of course. In other words, the fruits, I think specifically, of their fertility cult with the temple prostitution will lead to childlessness. And similarly, of course, today, much childlessness is unfortunately through choice, I think, for many, many people.

And this is a bad thing. The opposite, of course, is a good thing. Lots of bad news here, so I want to give you a little good news.

If this is a bad thing, you want the opposite of this as the good thing. We want families. We want children.

Psalm 127, 3, Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward. It is a good and wonderful blessing from God Almighty.

Families are a good thing. And therefore, churches should encourage this. Society should encourage this.

We should help them achieve this goal if we are able. Now, I know often in society, the first thing politicians think about is money. Let's just give them better tax breaks.

I'm not going to argue against that. But I think there's a lot more we can do societally this way. We have lots of propaganda for evil things.

Let's have propaganda for good things, right? Let's encourage these kind of things that we see the opposite of, unfortunately, over and over again. We need to be aware of this, although we might not think of it this way. I wanted to highlight that because it's here in this text.

It talks about children a number of times, both young kids and older kids, that they're washed away from warfare or whatnot. But losing them is a bad thing. We ought to encourage to protect and keep them and preserve the next generation.

Now, he repeats himself in verse 16 there, repeating the idea that is of verse 11, where he says there, no birth, no pregnancy, no conception. And here he says, they shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb.

So the idea of fruitfulness here is not just in general, although I don't think it's excluded. But he's, I think, focusing especially upon children again. And if they're not barren, they will lose their children, he tells them.

That is, they will lose them. We read here, I will kill the children of their womb, not in their womb, although that may happen by wicked men, of course. But part of the punishment here is somehow, some way, as probably the kids are even growing up, that they're going to be lost because of the warfare around them, invading armies that are coming upon them.

Again, they were warned generation after generation, this is going to happen, I'm not playing around. And they're going to be cast off finally, verse 17. My God will cast them away, a similar idea as we saw in chapter, or verse 15, I will drive them from my house, because they did not obey him.

And they shall be wanderers among the nations. Deuteronomy 28, here we are again with the curses. Maybe you recall this curse.

Verse 37, and you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the Lord will drive you. They shall be wanderers among the nations. Kind of like the curse of Cain, Genesis 4, right? He just wanders the world.

No more special protection, that's the idea here. They will be a people without a home, rootless, ever struggling. And so they have ever since the time of Christ in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

And they are no longer special, in other words. The covenant, the Mosaic covenant with the coming of Christ has destroyed and eradicated their specialness. They, like the rest of the world, Gentiles, need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They need to be saved. Eventually, the Jews, by God's grace, some will be saved, just as some of us have been saved, the Gentiles as well. Lastly, this teaches us that God judges.

God judges not just the world, but His own people. And of course, that judgment of our God above is a judgment of a father upon His children. We see this just in the history of the Old Testament.

That's why it's helpful to know and see some timelines. And remember, this is going on over hundreds of years. David is 900 BC.

Moses was 1,200 or 1,300 BC. This time is 730s or so BC. Hundreds and hundreds of years.

And even after this, till the time of Christ, God still preserved and watched over the church, although it had been thrown off into captivity. And so it may look like random acts, of course, turmoil and invasions during their perspective and their time, even in our life and our time, but it's not. It's a punishment of God from His hand upon people.

Deuteronomy 32, 39. Deuteronomy 32, 39, we read. I put to death, and I bring to life, and no one can deliver from my hand.

That's why you read here over and over again. It's not the prophet. It is, I will breathe them to the last man.

Yes, they will woe when I depart from them, just as I saw Ephraim. I will drive them from my house. It's God.

God, God, God doing all this. He is involved. Now, He uses the tools of history.

He uses the tools of the Babylonian army. He uses the tools of the Roman army. He uses the tools of whatever army today to His own ends, to be sure.

And they are guilty in their own ways because they really want to be these wicked tools. But it's God behind it all, first and last. And our just God of the covenant still brings punishment upon us today, individuals, families, communities, churches, nations.

We know our sins and the effects that flow from them for ourselves. Although I admit on the larger scale of a national issue, it becomes a little harder at times. But in all this, it is our loving Father.

He's not being too harsh. He's doing this for our own good. By hurting us towards repentance and sanctified life, He takes that stick, as I'm sure some of us older people have with their fathers, and whacks them on the knuckle.

Sometimes that doesn't work. You have to whack them somewhere else until they get the point. And it's not just the Jews.

It's our own lives sometimes as well in this nation. Submit, therefore, to the Lord's hand of discipline is the lesson we ought to learn. Of course, part of that submission means trusting in Him.

It also means repenting and fleeing back to Him, for they did neither here during the time of Hosea. And we ought to pray that we become more holy through such discipline in our life. Let us pray.

Indeed, God Almighty, as we see the horrors of this judgment coming upon them and upon their children, which I'm sure was probably even more terrifying to the mothers, our Lord and Savior, may we see for ourselves how serious you take your covenant, your discipline upon your people to teach them to turn away from wickedness because they did not obey Him. May that never be said of us, Lord. Certainly, we do not obey perfectly in thought, word, and deed, but He means in a persistent, presumptuous way.

They would not turn back. We see this over and over again in the life of Hosea and others. Our Lord God, may our hearts not be harmed.

May You continue to keep us soft, and we always cling to You, Lord, and flee from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Help us, we pray, by the blood of our Lord and Savior. Be with us by Your Spirit.

Amen. Let us arise.