

Time To Seek The Lord

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea chapter 10. Hosea chapter 10 verses 9 through 15 to the end of the chapter. Hosea chapter 10 verses 9 and following.

Let us listen attentively to the Word of God. O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah. There they stood, the battle of Gibeah against the children of iniquity, and did not overtake them.

When it was my desire, I will chasten them. People shall be gathered against them when I bind them for their two transgressions. Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh grain, but I harnessed her fair neck.

I will make Ephraim pull a plow, Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods. Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he comes and rains righteousness on you. You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity, you have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men.

Therefore, tumults shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered, as Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle, a mother dashing pieces upon her children. This shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness. At dawn the King of Israel shall be cut off utterly.

Let us pray. And so, Lord, your word here with strong language reminds us again of the ongoing sin and wickedness in the northern tribes, especially God, Ephraim, city of Bethel, but also in the midst of it, God, as you call them to repentance, that they would indeed break up their fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord. Indeed, God Almighty, whenever there is sin, that is the time to seek the Lord.

And may this be a challenge and a call for us as well as comforting to those, God, as it is appropriate here this evening to hear this message of turning to the Lord our God, repenting and fleeing to Him we pray. Amen. So in the midst of yet another series of warnings and descriptions of transgressions, of disobedience, Hosea brings out the explicit call of repentance again.

It's there implicitly, I argue, and clearly must be the case, but why else would God bring up all their sins and transgressions? Because He's a petty God? No, He wants them to repent. He wants them to feel the sting of the guilt of their conscience. And here He makes it more explicit through the mouth of the prophet, for it is time to seek the Lord, verse 12.

Thus the point of the listing of sins and piling up illustrations and metaphor after figure of speech is to draw them to this point out of their lethargy and spiritual stupor, and therefore it's still true today. For we also struggle with these things, perhaps individually or as a family or even as churches. That it is a temptation, that we can fall into spiritual lethargy and the like, and we need to wake up and remember it is time to seek the Lord and to flee from sin.

Sinning from the Days of Gibeah

Sinning from the days of Gibeah, verses 9-12, here. O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah. Days of Gibeah.

This came up in the prior chapter. You may not recall it because I didn't give a lot of detail because it was quite gruesome. There in the book of Judges.

The assault of the Levites' concubine. I'll just leave it at that. Illustrating, therefore, their moral depravity from early on.

Chapter 9 of the book of Judges. For the leadership there at that particular time. Why did the Levite have a concubine? What kind of leadership is that? What's going on in early Israel? For the common folk, for they had assaulted her and then she died.

And violation, of course, of both tables of the law at the time. And ever since then, it seems this is an illustration here of one of the high watermarks or low watermarks of their wickedness. And it just kept going on.

That's why he refers to it twice, chapter 9 and here again in chapter 10. They knew the story. They know what he's referring to.

He's saying you're just as bad as that time. You've been stubborn in your sin. Again, year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation.

And so it's an ongoing parallel idea here. After the horrific Levitical or Levite incident, the Jews went to war there. And Judges and the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out to a man, you may recall.

But the battle, as we read here in the verse, did not overtake them, for some of them survived. That is, the iniquity is the implication here, that some of them survived even to this day. There they stood in the battle, the battle of Gibeah against the children of iniquity, and did not overtake them.

They didn't completely wipe them out. He's using this implied metaphor that you're like them, and it's still going on today. Iniquity hasn't been wiped out.

Although it's a different kind of iniquity, to be sure. But still, it shows their high-handed sin. In other words, Israel of Hosea's time is as bad, or maybe even worse, than the time of Gibeah.

And so God, therefore, reserves for Himself the time to discipline them. Verse 10, when it is My desire, the Lord tells through the mouth of the prophet Hosea, I will chasten them. The word chasten here, we've run across this a few times, like in the Psalms, for example.

To discipline, especially with respect to teaching. The purpose is to bring them to a better understanding of what needs to be learned, both in teaching and in practice, or doctrine and in practice. It is used 90 times in the Pentateuch.

It is used 50 times or so in the Proverbs and Psalms. That's just those two books. And then about 25 times, not as much, in the Prophets.

This particular interesting word that you get the New Testament equivalent of pedagogue from. The Greek word. The parallel to this Hebrew word.

In other words, God is not punishing because He just feels like being mean. He has a good reason. He has a purpose in bringing about this chastisement, this discipline, and punishment with a purpose to change them and to redirect them.

This is why God does these things. This is why judgment is brought upon them, because indeed He does care for them. He wants them to change, and as we know, He has providence.

Some do change, although collectively as a nation they do not, and they eventually get wiped out in 722, which is not far from this time period, during the time of Hosea. This is often invoked to express the fatherly concern for the Lord God upon Israel, this word chastisement. It's used in dealing with a stubborn child.

We see this today, perhaps even in our own lives. Hardships come upon us because we persist in doing the wrong thing, and the Lord will bring us to submission one way or the other. That's His chastisement upon us for that purpose.

Not because He's a petty God, He just feels like spanking you. People have this impression sometimes because they had perhaps a bad father who did that, bad parents who didn't give a good reason why they were disciplined, they're just angry all the time. That's not our God.

He has a perfectly good reason. And He expressed it here in the mouth of Hosea. It's not just Hosea, right? There are other prophets during this time.

We kind of forget this. You're reading Hosea, all you see is Hosea in the northern tribes, and oh, there's other kings, excuse me, prophets, Amos, Elijah, Elisha, perhaps, and the like. They were there as a short little series of them before the fall in 722, and David's about 950.

It's really like 350 years or so. The two transgressions here he mentions, God, I will chastise them when I will. People shall be gathered against them when I bind them for their two transgressions, or it could be understood as double transgression or double iniquity depending on the translation, or maybe it does mean two serious violations.

In my mind, that would be the violation of the second table, and then the violation of the first table, or maybe the violation of the first table twice over, because that was a persistent problem for them. But I think it's along the idea of doubly bad. It's very serious sins going on here with them.

The Lord will discipline the Old Testament church is what He's doing here, not just Jews as a nation, but Jews as a people of God, who also were a nation at the same time. They wore two hats. By the invading Assyrian army, people shall be gathered against them, we read there in the middle of verse 10.

This is how God is going to finally and ultimately bring discipline from them from on high. It is not a random chance event. It is what it is my desire, not what is the desire of anyone else to discipline my people.

God Almighty will do it Himself. It is centered in Him, and it is the work of a loving Father for His people, because He cares. This is an expression here by Hosea, that God indeed cares, and when it's His time and His desire, He will bring chastisement to the Old Testament saints, and He will bring chastisement to ourselves and our churches, when it's appropriate.

Sowing Righteousness by Seeking the Lord

The second point here, sowing righteousness by seeking the Lord, verses 11 through 13. Ephraim was a trained heifer that loves to thresh grain, but I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull a plow, and Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break up clods. So verses 11 and 12, clearly He's using this, and into verse 13, imagery, working the farm with the animal, and they have the plow behind them to break up the ground.

What is He actually trying to say here in this imagery? That's pretty obvious to them, because what, 90% of the world, we're a bunch of farmers, we're very close to the earth in the way we aren't. We don't think in these terms, at least I don't think in these terms. So here, I would like to break it down, make it a little more clear, I hope.

Verse 11, Ephraim was a trained heifer. What's the idea here? A heifer that is taught to tread out the corn and loves that work. Matthew, Henry.

Not that she was doing good work and enjoying them, but rather as freed in contrast to being harnessed, right? We read the third line there, Ephraim is trained, she loves to thresh grain, so she likes what she's doing. But I harnessed her fair neck, and I will make Ephraim pull a plow. So she's free, then God's not going to make her free anymore.

There's the contrast here, the implied contrast. So the idea is that she is at liberty, as Matthew, Henry says, to eat at pleasure. She likes what she likes and is doing as a heifer.

And the work itself is dry and easy, both in its diversion and its own wages until the Lord God comes along and brings discipline and control upon her and harnesses her. And she's going to hate that. That's the imagery here.

She enjoyed, in other words, her leisure and pleasures in life, like I pointed out this morning, right? But she'll be harnessed for what? Judgment, verses 11b and following. Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break up clods. That's a hard and difficult job, isn't it? You've seen them perhaps in movies and whatnot.

They have this large device. Well, back then it wasn't metal like we have 100 years ago or whatever, but they're trying to dig into the earth with large sticks or stones or something, digging deep, hard work, and you have to control the animal and encourage it, and it's hot. Got to get rid of rocks.

Got to stop the animal. Get over there and move the huge stone, perhaps by yourself. It's hard labor is the picture here because it is hard to be under the discipline of the Lord.

He will control them. He will redirect them as needed. That's the picture.

Their punishment, of course, is by a foreign army, and that would be what? Hard and difficult, like pulling a plow and breaking up clods of hard earth and rock and stone. And in contrast, he takes like a breath here, verse 12, sow for yourselves righteousness and reap in mercy. Break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord for it comes and rains righteousness on you.

The contrast, the implied contrast here. They must sow good in order to receive mercy and goodness upon them, but instead, of course, as we know, they had sowed wickedness. You have plowed wickedness, verse 13.

Again, they're supposed to reap and break up their fallow ground. That is, they are to repent and have a life of humility and following God Almighty, although an imperfect obedience, of course, that is blessed by God in spite of their imperfection, for this is not a picture of, well, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, sow for yourself righteousness and reap mercy. See, if you just work hard enough, you can get to heaven.

That's not the picture here. This is a picture of sanctification. This is those already in the covenant by God's mercy.

They were born there. They were circumcised there. They were raised there.

They've been taught and instructed. God cared enough for them that he gave them prophets year in after year in that he didn't give anyone else in the world. So they're in the covenant.

So objectively and externally, in that sense, the picture here, then, is of sanctification. Sow for yourself. That is, stop being disobedient.

Do the right thing. Break up your fallow ground. That is what? Repent.

Break up the fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord, a powerful picture of a contrite and sorrowful heart. For a hard heart in sin is like a hard ground, isn't it? I mean, we talk about it. That's the language there.

It's a hard heart. It's a hard ground. It's a hard soil.

The picture of the seed in the soil there in the parable of Jesus in the New Testament. Wherein no good fruit grows, rather the opposite, weed and obnoxious bushes. Repentance, the picture here is repentance involves examining ourselves, yourselves, your hearts, your minds, so that you dig up the sins and repent of them if you're hiding them.

Only then can we fully turn to the Lord God of the covenant. We have to break up the fallow ground of our heart. That's part of the call of a contrite heart, of the spirit, of the law, coming to us and bringing conviction upon us.

It's a powerful image. Break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord. The two go hand in hand.

You talk about, I really want to follow God. I really want to turn back to Him. What are you doing? Are you repenting? Are you hating of your sins? I got an email or a text.

I can't tell. I have this phone service for the church that comes to me in text form, so it's not always clear. I think it's an email from the church.

They asked me. They said, I'm looking for God. What can I do? I gave them a brief answer.

I said, of course, you need to find a local church, get a Bible out of a library or something, read this. I gave them a link because obviously they're on email. They're on the internet.

I gave them a link to a short pamphlet we have in the OPC about the gospel. I never heard back from the guy. Maybe it was a scam.

Maybe it was a bot. I don't know. In a couple years, it could be AI for all I know.

That's how bad things are on the internet. But the point being, people say this, and the answer is, okay, I'll give you the answer. Now what? What are you going to do with it? Are you going to break up the foul ground or is it just talk? I don't know.

I hope maybe someday it'll strike him. Maybe we'll find him one day. But we, not just him, all of us, have to be aware and to know that we are called to turn to the Lord from our sins, and that includes the hard work, for it is hard work, to break up the ground of our hearts.

It is always time to seek the Lord God. It's the Lord. It's the covenant keeping God here in verse 12.

The Lord of the covenant, the one who has a special relationship with you through your baptism. For he is a faithful and kind master and father. He disciplines us for our own good, yet he is always ready to forgive us through Jesus Christ.

You just need to cry out for mercy and forsake your transgressions, to acknowledge your sins, and to know in thought, in word, and in deed. For one way or the other, somehow or in some way, that's where the sin is going to come up. And here, chapter after chapter, of crying out to them and urging them and trying to bring conviction upon them, he says more explicitly here as he has done elsewhere a few times, it is time to seek God Almighty.

To flee from bail, to flee from the false worship, from fleeing from adultery, and thievery, and whatever sins that we have even today. Repentance, as we know, is the changing of our mind and heart about our sins. And this is always our call.

There isn't like a special time in which you go to the Lord and seek him out for forgiveness, is the picture clearly here. Not just to seek God and have a nice little conversation, but for forgiveness. It's whenever you sin.

And he will hear us. Because he knows that we struggle with disobedience. That's why I mention now and again, maybe a lot, that we are sinners saved by grace.

To remind us that we're not perfect yet. We're not in heaven yet. We still struggle with bad thoughts and bad words or sins of omission, which can be especially tricky at times, right? Should I have done something? Sometimes I'm not supposed to do something, right? And even then, if it's not intentional in the sense of high-headed sin, it's still a sin.

And you cry to God and God has mercy. He knows. But sometimes we don't always have an easy answer on some of these things.

As you get older in life, you know this. You can't always find an answer to some moral questions. I just do the best I can with my family, my friends, or whatever the case may be.

A full repentance means breaking up with comfort of sin. Pouring the blood of Christ upon our soul by faith and sowing righteousness and good works in our life. So he has it in our minds perhaps backwards, but when you have a conversation with somebody, it just depends on the context, which order you want to say something.

Here he starts talking about sowing for yourself righteousness, live an obedient life, and you will have goodness upon you. And of course, this is done through repentance. But instead, you have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity, and you have eaten the fruit of lies.

That's not full repentance. That's not breaking up the hardened ground of their hearts. In fact, they are doubling down and making the ground even harder of their hearts.

They're plowing wickedness here that they are doing instead of the right thing that he expresses in verse 12, this kind of sanctified life covered by the mercy of our Lord and Savior. Israel has plowed sin and disobedience. Their plowing of sin leads to lies that they feed upon.

Private lies perhaps or public deception of course go hand in hand, or just the lie in general that everything's fine with them. Whatever the case is, it is bad. Instead of repenting of their hardened hearts, they trust it in themselves, in their own path, in their own lie, because you trust it in your own way.

This is, again, another powerful description. Verse 12 is of the life of holiness, which of course is first rooted in repentance and the implied faith for it is time to seek the Lord. You must seek in faith and trust in Him that He will save you from your sins.

And verse 13 is the flip side of it, of the life outside of repentance, of the life outside of faith and trust in Him. You have plowed wickedness. You have reaped iniquity.

And it's not as though it's done unintentionally or haphazardly. It's what their life is like. In sin they lived and moved and had their being, as we saw in Ephesians 2 this morning.

Why? Because you trust it in your own way. These verses remind us and show us and illustrate to us the Old Testament was just as powerful in many ways as the New Testament about sin and about redemption with, I think, very useful imagery here that we can apply to ourselves or our situation around us. The wickedness that has been plowed in our nation and reaping of iniquity and further wickedness because they trusted in their own way in the multitude of your mighty men.

Of course, here it's specifically not just themselves in the abstract but their armies because, of course, the invaders are coming. They had multiple combats at the time. We saw some of those stories in 2 Kings on Wednesday night, for example.

And they had some victories. They thought, this is going pretty good for us. But at the end of the day, of course, they were supposed to rely upon God.

God says, use the army but you used the army in dependence upon me. They were using the army in dependence upon themselves. They were ignoring God and His will for them.

That was the problem. And thus, here, instead of repenting, they made it worse and doubled down. They refused to submit to the Lord's call in trusting in their armies.

Today, we are slowly reaping the widespread harm of evil and wickedness because of what we have sown and generations past as a nation. We sowed moral license, lax divorce laws, rationalized lies, and defense of murder for decade after decade, now three, four generations on. And what are we reaping? Broken homes, abortion until birth, mutilation of children, even in the womb for body parts, all in the name of gender affirmation now.

This is what we have reaped as a nation because we have rested in our own way, our own individuality, and our own unique sins and desires and lusts that we could fulfill so easily in the American dream. Churches, of course, should examine ourselves as well and not think that we are immune to social ills and sins. Of course, we are born into this world, and we have a blind spot at times.

We can rationalize fornication or even adultery, I've seen, making excuses for people by claiming that we have to be more, what, loving and more forgiving. And somehow they just tripped into sin. They fell into sin.

They didn't know where they were going. It was crazy. This 35-year-old having a long-distance relationship with this other guy in Texas or Tennessee or whatever it was for like 15, 20 years.

And people are online saying, well, you know, he's the leader. She's not, so she's not really as culpable like he is. They're both adults.

She's 30 years old. What the heck? She was married or single or whatever the case is. Making excuses in the churches.

The Plundering of Israel for Her Sins

We're not immune is the point. God will not be mocked. The plundering of Israel for her sins, verses 14 to 15.

Therefore, tumult shall arise among your people and all your fortresses shall be plundered. That's it. War is coming.

You've had it good for such a long time. You had a little problems here and there, of course. God brought warnings before, even drought, during the time of Elijah, as you recall.

Tumult and plunderings, verses 14 to 16, clearly a description of impending war. The Assyrian army knocking at their doorstep. It doesn't come in one fell swoop.

There's little attacks here. They hear rumbles of, you know, rumors of war over there in the northern part and then the eastern side. And they're like, oh, hopefully he'll avoid us and maybe we can make a treaty with Egypt.

Things like this are going on. Lots of machinations and dealings and concerns. We have here in the middle of verse 14 a description.

We frankly don't know who he's talking about. We have this a few times. Amazing how much detail we have, right? You've all probably read the Bible at least once in your life.

All this stuff, all these names. And we know a lot of this stuff. We've found it independent of the Bible.

We've dug up a lot of these things, a lot of these cities, but still now and then you have something like this. We're like, we don't know who Shalman is or Arbel. Right? Shalman maybe is the Shalmanser king of the Assyrians, another name.

It's not uncommon. They had multiple names. We know this.

In fact, we run across this in 2 Kings. Joash and Jehoash put an H sometimes or not. Bet-Arbel.

Of course, Bet there, Arbel, is the house of Arbel. But the point being whatever terrible battle was going on there, their audience knew about it. And he was drawing an illustration to them.

Remember that time when Shalman plundered Bet-Arbel on the day of battle and how horrendous it was where the mothers were dashing pieces upon their children? This was,

again, not an uncommon, terrifying war crime. We would call it a war crime today. They didn't really quite have that mindset back then.

The Assyrians would do it. Just kill everybody. Jesus, excuse me, Hosea is warning them.

They don't repent. They don't repent and follow the Messiah as they ought to. Jesus our Lord.

They will end up like that battle there. Plundered. Destroyed.

Even shattered to pieces. Perhaps even physically. It will happen.

God's punishment is not so abstract but just like the battles of the eyewitness that they saw themselves, it will come upon them. And they were brutal. Combat was very personal back then.

I can't imagine stabbing somebody with a sword. It's a little different with a gun, isn't it? A little further away. I don't have an impact.

I don't get to really see anything. But they did it. They had no remorse.

They were just incredibly dangerous. Now, the thing I want to note here is the longer we wait, the longer Israel waits to what? Turn to the Lord. To repent.

To break up the foul ground of their hearts. The greater the punishment will be. For persistence in sin itself is sin.

Persistence in sin itself is sin. That is, it comes as compounding iniquity upon themselves day by day. There were droughts, as I pointed out, during the time of Elijah.

They did not listen. More prophets, occasional wars and battles came upon them as the Syrians, not to be confused with the Assyrians with an A, came upon them as we saw in 1st and 2nd Kings there. Ahab and the like fighting them.

Sometimes losing, sometimes even winning. They didn't learn their lesson. More prophets came.

Still, no repentance. From the king, from his advisors, from the people themselves en masse. This all leads eventually to this time.

Here, the time of Hosea overlaps the fall of Samaria in 722 when they will be destroyed. They will be as a mother dashed in pieces upon her children because they persisted over and over again and God brought down his wrath like he promised. Great wickedness, verse 15.

Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel. That's one of the main headquarters of the north. We have a lot of false worship of the calves, for example.

There, Bethel, that's why he highlights that. Because of your great wickedness and at dawn the king of Israel shall be cut off utterly. No more kings.

They're gone. It's the last of the kings in the north in 722 B.C. And they never arose again. Thus it shall be done to you, conceived there as a single wickedness because of your great wickedness there.

But, of course, some wickedness stands out more than others. Persistent, willful violation of the first table is the worst. Both in form and in substance.

What do I mean by form? By form, I mean the outward acts of worship, the slaying of the animals, the use of the altars, the placement of the altars. Where are they supposed to be? Oh, that's right. Jerusalem.

Not the high places. Right? Priest, who's involved in the offerings, the type of offerings. God said the Aaronic priesthood in Jerusalem in the Israel of the northern tribes, of course, said no under Jeroboam who made up his parallel religion and said, this is the true Israelites.

We are the true Jews, as it were. And that's like a rebellious child rejecting his parents' wishes. Just out and out saying, I don't, I don't, I don't, whatever you think I want to do the opposite.

And that was just Jeroboam. And it just grew from there. Open, high-handed, willful, rebellion.

And the outward forms, as we know, these forms do change. So in that sense, they're not substantial. There's no more altar.

But when God says it, that should be sufficient. I got something for you. This is to help you.

To teach you. Because that's what it was, a tool. And you don't want it? I give you this gift.

These are the ordinances of the Old Testament. We have the Lord's Supper and we have baptism. What do you think of a Christian who's like, I don't want to be baptized? What? That's like the first thing you've got to do.

It's right there in the Great Commission. Oh, but there's no baptism in heaven. There are people who talk this way.

That's an earthly ordinance. Kind of like Jewish kind of a person, what's your problem? I'm more holy than that. What? That's it? You can see that's high-handed rebellion.

What is your problem? Or just gross ignorance sometimes depending on their age. But my experience often it's just high-handed rebellion. And that could be really worse in so many ways.

It's like, it's not a hard thing to do. Just get baptized. It's not going to hurt you.

At least with the substance of the matter that is, you know, preserved life, you know that instinctively. You wouldn't know about baptism but going through the Word of God. But because that's the naked will of God, that's one of the differences.

When God demands it, the positive law, because that's what that is, it changes over time. You used to have baptism, now you don't. But the simple fact that God said it should be enough.

It's the pure will of God. Whereas the moral stuff is the will of God, but it's built into nature that even unbelievers know, I don't really want to hurt myself. I really don't want to hurt my family.

That's one of the main differences, and that's why you can see much more gross sin in some senses with respect to the form. But the substance at the end of the day is more significant than the outward forms that change, of course. The inward moral law never changes.

Their persistence there in violating the second commandment displayed in the heart of unbelief. Their outward actions express their inward hardened hearts of plowing wickedness and therefore reaping further iniquity. It was easy to slide, of course, from worshiping with the Lord God, Jehovah, with a calf.

That was during Aaron's time, way back in 1200 B.C. We're now in 735 or something. You can see how that would slide right into just outright, I'm going to worship Baal, because Baal was using calf worship as well, and things like that. They started mixing and matching outward forms of worship, and so they slid from comprehensive weak worship of God to just out and out, we're worshiping Baal now.

Perhaps we don't know the actual, you know, the ins and outs of the particular details. I've highlighted this before. As you remember, God is at times called Baal.

It just means master, in a positive sense in a few texts in the Old Testament. Not often, as for obvious reasons, because the Jews were very confused about this. They might have moved from the calf worship to God is Baal to just Baal.

It's an easy slide. You can see that. That's the substance.

Now they're worshiping a false God altogether. A clear violation of not only the second commandment, but the first commandment. Some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Accumulated as a nation, the sins were a great wickedness indeed, but the high hand of violations of the first table is the greatest of all the sins there, for they are replacing God with another God. False worship is bad. False worship with a false God is the worst.

It's the absolute worst. This is, of course, implied in the text, but what's further implied, therefore, is with great wickedness comes what? Great repentance. Should come with great repentance.

Crying out to God Almighty for now is the time to seek the Lord all the more, because of how serious this violation and transgression is. Private sins require private repentance, but public sins require public repentance. And the kings and the nation there had to fast and mourn.

Even Ahab did that for a little bit, as you recall, but these people would not. Sin is part of this world. Everyone sins, some more than others, yet the Lord will hear us if we flee from that sin and embrace Christ anew.

We seek the Lord of the covenant. Never hold back thinking your sin is just too much. God didn't say it was just give up.

You have great wickedness, why bother? But rather, He says, break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord and that call is always a call for all of us whenever we sin. Let us never forget that. Let us pray.

Indeed, God Almighty, your patience is wonderful as we see with Israel here, even now, for they are not wiped out. You have spent these many years through the mouth of Hosea, and surely He said more than we have written here, showing your long suffering kindness towards them. And whenever we sin, God, we know that is the time to seek forgiveness for you are there to grant it through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Amen.