

A Cunning Canaanite

Let us turn to our Bibles to Hosea chapter 12. Hosea chapter 12. Verses 7 through 14.

Verses 7 through 14. Hosea 12, 7 and following. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God.

And the end of this chapter here. A cunning Canaanite, deceitful scales are in his hand, he loves to oppress. And Ephraim said, Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself, and all my labors, they shall find in me no iniquity, that is sin.

But I am the Lord your God, ever since the land of Egypt. I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions.

I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets. Though Gilead has idols, surely they are vanity. Though they sacrifice bulls and Gilgal, indeed their altars shall be heaps in the furrows of the field.

Jacob fled the country of Syria. Israel served for a spouse, and for a wife he tended sheep. By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved.

Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly. Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, and return his reproach upon him. Let us pray.

Through these words of the prophet Hosea God, we see an admonition and a warning there, in the opening verses in particular, against the deceitful scales and economic exploitation. And so God, may it remind us, you are indeed concerned about the name and honor, and the worship, and the false worship in this case, as verse 11 describes, against you. But you're also concerned, Lord, as a God of care and justice for what they do among each other against their fellow Jews.

And Lord, may we learn this lesson in our lives if we struggle therein, and to pray that we would also have in our own actions, and those around us in our nation, proper and fair scales, and not deceitful scales. We ask this in your name alone. Amen.

So most of the sins bemoaned by the prophet, as we know, involve gross violations of the first table, the first four commandments, especially the first and second, and a very close runner-up, or maybe the same thing, third commandment. The God of the covenant made crystal clear through the mouth and the pen of Moses what was required to honor him, and most of the tribes rejected it and followed Jeroboam, as we know, in the great split after Solomon. They had up to that point, and the southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, had up to this point, and Hosea, the Aaronic priesthood, the altar, the temple, and the holy days, given to them by God's institution, His explicit command, to show forth Christ and His work for His people, and to help them grow in their sanctification, for they were means of grace, very much like what we have the sacraments and preaching today.

But instead of submitting to the Lord and rejoicing in these ordinances, as they are called, they rebelled, and they continued to rebel in the time of Hosea, and his main mission field,

the word we use today, was the northern tribes. At any time, the northern Jews could have traveled to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, but they basically didn't. The vast majority did not.

They were content to have Baal worship, the worship in the high places, and to go elsewhere, like Bethel, which had turned into a den of wickedness. Instead, they dug into their unrepentant hole even deeper, away from the light of God's providence, going deeper and deeper into the tunnel of sin. And in doing so, they also were breaking the second table of the law, showing so much disdain for the Lord over the generations that eventually manifested itself for disdain for their fellow Jews.

This is often the case. This is why in early America, oaths before God, for example, were required for everyone, because to be an atheist, to deny the first table of the law, brought you honor suspicion what you're going to do about the second table of the law, what kind of shenanigans you're going to be up to. And I think we're seeing this today.

So let's delve a little further here in these verses, highlighting especially the first few verses here, because it is something that doesn't come up often in Hosea, the violations of the second table of the law, right, the last six commandments.

Economic Oppression by Pride

So we have here in verses seven and eight, economic oppression through or by pride, the pride of their hearts, the arrogance and, of course, greed, there's all kinds of things going on, I'm sure, depending on which particular Jew you're asking, as the case may be. But here, collectively, the prophet describes them as having pride, clearly.

Sure, I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself and all my labors. He's just thinking about himself, look what I've got. Look how successful I am.

But that success came with a cost. They were violating God's law. Now the opening description here, this sentence, the title of my sermon, a cunning Canaanite.

Why did I stick with that? Because that word, Canaanites, is quite interesting. It can mean one who dwells in the land of Canaan, a Canaanite, like we typically hear the word, or a merchant. Or a merchant.

And so you can see already, I hope, the theme here, a deceitful merchant. Oh, that makes sense. What's he up to? He's a merchant, a deceitful merchant.

Which one? Is it a play on words? The scales and, of course, riches that he's bragging about suggest a merchant, someone who's lying and conniving merchant. But there is another word for merchant in Hebrew. You see this in Nehemiah 3.31, for example.

It's not the word Canaan, Canaanite. It's almost right out of the Hebrew where we get the word Canaanite. And that's not the word used here.

So this tells us that it's, I believe, a play on words. It's you're a deceitful merchant, deceitful scales, and in so doing, you're acting like a Canaanite, a pagan. What kind of Jews are you? What kind of people of God, we would say today, what kind of Christians are you? Well, these are Christians, if they used the word anachronistically, before time, before Christ came, they were looking to the Messiah to come.

And they should have been acting differently. They had God's law and special command. So it's a play on words here.

A cunning Canaanite, a cunning merchant. You're kind of both here, and this is not good. It's a shame upon them.

And, of course, he speaks of Ephraim here, the northern tribes who were not only unfaithful to the Lord of the covenant, but unfaithful to each other. We read about this in prior verses, and especially back in chapter seven, which gives us a short list of violations of the second table of the law. Fraud, robbery, adultery.

Fraud and robbery would fit more here along the ideas of economic oppression or deceitful scales and becoming rich. Of course, it's the wrong way of becoming rich, clearly here in these verses. And so this is implying, it seems to me, a double unfaithfulness.

And he's highlighting this fact to wake them up. Do you really want to be called a Canaanite? I mean, what kind of a Jew are you? They're still prideful in the northern tribes, as you recall, through the book of Kings. Look at us.

We're Jews. We're special. We're not like you guys, whatever the case is.

And so here he's trying to bring humility upon them and call them to account. So that we're being compared to Canaanites and bad merchants, thieves and the like, wicked and worthy of judgment. And of course, not just in their actions, only in their hearts as well.

For outwardly, they had the Jewish and Jewish inheritance, but clearly inwardly, they were acting like deceitful merchants in their practices and their hearts and acting more like pagans or Canaanites. And so God is judging them for this, for deceit and what I would describe as more broadly, oppression. That's the word actually used here in the text.

He loves to oppress. Now, first of all, deceitful scales. The idea, of course, is an uneven balance that would give them more money.

We don't use scales today, typically, and everyday financial transactions where you have a bar of gold to compare against however much shekels or pieces of gold that you have or metal to see if it's the same amount, therefore the same value as we know the old scales, but we still use scales elsewhere. When you go shopping, we have a scale. I remember doing that as a kid.

You grab it and throw it on top and see if you can make it heavier or play around with it and the like. So stores do this for fruit, for candies or whatever else at times. We have scales that still occurs today.

And if it's out of whack, you probably don't know other than you just see the little arrow pointing to the top and you're hoping it's what calibrated correctly and they're not cheating. It's not a deceitful scale. That's today in other ways.

Maybe not so obvious, but false advertisement, of course, is one of them. There's actually a law against lying, but it seems to me our policies on that seem to be very much stretching thin. We allow a lot when it comes to advertisement and what people say or claim.

And they can play, you know, like a teenager, the technical game. I haven't actually violated the law. That's okay.

You can still be immoral. The law doesn't cover everything. We all know this.

And so we warn ourselves and warn our kids to be careful about false advertisement. Shrinking product sizes, that's happened over the last 10 years now, right? You buy ice cream, you buy bags. We're always surprised the bags seem to get smaller, but the price is the same.

And they never say, no, smaller bag. It's just here it is. Kind of the implication being nothing's changed.

You got to be paying attention to these things. Devaluating our money through backroom manipulations, things that we thought were conspiracies at times. We find out they're actually playing games.

They're playing fast and loose with the economy at times. We saw this with derivatives under Obama and probably that's still going on in other ways and forms. Government corruption, shady business practices.

Again, things that the law doesn't technically cover, but you know is morally suspect at best. I remember, and I still remember to this day, probably because we were being used as teenagers by my church for free labor in downtown Denver back in the 80s. I remember as a junior in junior high.

Down off the 16th Street Mall. You may recall near the clock tower, a store called Mady and F. Three or four stories tall. Right off the drag.

And we worked in the basement and cleaned out the closet and all the clothes or whatever else. They were getting free labor, I realize this now. I didn't care.

I get to go there and I think I got free food. I found out later they got caught cheating. Deceitful scales where they would raise the prices and then a week later, whatever the time scale is by law you can't do, they would have a sale.

So it was a game. They were raising the prices and they would have a sale and they would go back to normal later on. So they were actually getting more money.

They got caught for it. I don't know if that's why they eventually shut down, but that's the kind of things that still go on. Not just the Jews, but all kinds of people do it and that's not good.

And he describes them, again collectively, not every single Jew in the Northern tribe, but so many of them. He would describe them as he or they, singular here, Ephraim, he loves to oppress. We read in verse 7 here.

He loves to oppress. The word oppression here is very broad. It includes all kinds of sins and violations, but often I think in the text it describes more of the interpersonal nature, usually of a public, a bad interpersonal relation of a public nature.

For example here, Leviticus 6.2, this word is used. Leviticus 6.2, if a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping or about a pledge or about a robbery or if he is extorted from his neighbor. And so the word isn't translated oppression there, but rather the idea of lying or extortion and the like.

So it's very context dependent. Broadly as well, any sinful act towards an inferior, that's what I mean by I think often the idea of oppression in the Old Testament, that word, not very specific, is with respect to interpersonal nature of a superior to an inferior and you taking advantage of the inferior, that is the one who doesn't have the power in the relationship. Deuteronomy 24.14, you shall not oppress a hired servant, there you go, who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is within your land, within your gates.

Because they are at a disadvantage in maintaining the security and the food and the provisions they need for their family, for example, and you are not as the master and when you hire them you take advantage, you try to find your way around the law and the rules. And you run across this elsewhere, I think it's in Deuteronomy, I don't think it's Exodus, I'm pretty sure it's Deuteronomy, where God warns them, yeah, the year of Jubilee is coming up and don't think in your heart, because the year of Jubilee is coming up, I'm going to try to find some way around it because I'm going to lose my work from this guy because he's going to become free in a couple of years. He's like, no, that's not what you're supposed to do.

Don't think that way. See that? God's covering all these ways in which the heart is like, I want things to my advantage, I don't care about these poor people around me, these servants are slaves as the case may be back then. That's how oppression works.

There is another word that is translated as oppression, 1 Samuel 12.3, here I am, right, so Samuel tells them, the prophet, that here I am, witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed, whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, of whom have I cheated, whom have I oppressed, or from whom, whose hands have I received any bribe on which to blind my eyes, I will restore it to you. This particular word, oppression, same in English, but they're actually two different Hebrew words, in 1 Samuel 12, is more the idea of crush or be broken, and so we kind of hear that in the word oppression anyways, you're bearing down perhaps on something to the point of crushing them. Either way, the point here is economic oppression or bad business practices, right, deceitful scales are in his

hands, and he loves to have it so, this is his desire in his heart, he wants the money, he wants, he's greedy, they are greedy collectively, he does it with much gusto, not like he's kind of forcing, he's being forced into this matter, I can't help myself or something, he loves it, he describes them as, all these Jews, they work of new ways to deceive and come out in which they can make more and more money.

I don't think I need to go to too many modern examples of this problem in the American capitalism, there's so many ways in which they wish to make things difficult for consumers, for example, so they can make another fast buck, and they're already rich, massively rich companies, astoundingly rich in what they have. The pride of the rich, verse 8, and Ephraim said, surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself, and all my labors, it sounds like the exact thing God warned them against in Deuteronomy, he says, when you come into the land of promise, remember this? Don't say to yourself, look what my hands have done, what I have wrought, all the blessings I brought upon myself. No, they come from me.

This is clearly arrogance and pride. They don't praise the Lord and thank God for the blessings they have, surely I have become rich, I, I, it's what I have done and the wealth that I have brought upon myself through thievery and oppression, ill-gotten gain, we describe it today as, seeking immediate gratification of the flesh, they want that money and they want it now, or the prestige the money gives them, or the things they can buy with money, whatever the case is. And I think you already see clearly how much it parallels the temptations we have in our society, how much prosperity we have, it's astounding.

And they're hiding economic lies, economical lies or business, false business practices, they shall, he tells himself, they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin, look at me, I've done nothing wrong, he's either lying and redefining things as we see in our society, they're like, that's not really sin, or he's saying I'm getting away with it. Either way, it's not good. Much, much arrogance here.

The danger here for us is although much of a, most of us are not in position to cheat on this kind of a scale, like a big business, since we are consumers often and not businesses or producers in many ways, but it is part and parcel of the materialistic mind, mindset that is around us, of being consumed by consumerism and greed, which is a danger. We must therefore be self-aware of this, have humility in prayer and use the blessings that we have for others and not be drowned or succumbed to them as though they are only ours and ours alone. And of course, always to praise our Lord and Savior.

Historical Reminder of Grace

The second point here, verses 9-13, a couple of things are being said here, two themes, but I put them together for ease of preaching and presentation here. Verses 9-13, historical reminder of grace. Historical reminder of grace.

Reminder of the Lord's care through the prophets. He mentions the prophets twice there in verse 10 and verse 13, that the Jews were warned, the implication is, by the prophets. And even in verse 13, protected by the prophet, by a prophet, Moses, clearly, out of Egypt there in verse 13.

And so this shows by the mouth and the pen of Hosea, that God has been caring for them even though they have cared nothing for God, essentially. And it's the Lord our God, describes this, but I am the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt. Unlike the pagan deities who were aloof and regional, our God is universal and personal and intimate in the best sense of the word.

Because He is omnipresent and all loving, and demands great moral acts and sacrifices, what they demanded, the pagan gods, and our God fulfilled it Himself through the promise of the Messiah. The pagan gods demanded moral perfection to their false religions, and was often capricious as well. It would change things up, catch people off guard.

Very frustrating if you imagine trying to run to those kind of religions, and unfortunately it happens today as well, although it's not outright paganism. Our God is an evolved God, He sends the prophets, He sends the miracles. Ever since the land of Egypt, and I will again make you dwell in the land of tents, I have spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, that's God taking care of His people.

And so He gives them the word, He gives them the gospel, He gives them the law of God, and therefore by implication calls them over and over again. But in describing Himself as the Lord your God, the covenant-keeping God, ever since the land of Egypt, He hearkens again, hey, listen, I'm the one who preserved you. You're here today, the blessings you have today, because I brought you out of the land of slavery, under Moses.

You should be grateful, and you should be submitting to my word. Where is the honor due to me, is the implication behind this. And I have also, at the same time, been with you this long, the implication also being, I've cared for you.

I've not cast you away. I am still your Lord. All this time of unfaithfulness, I have been faithful to you.

We must ever remember that, if we get too prideful in our hearts. But He gives them a warning as well, right from the beginning. I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast.

They have all this prosperity, they have all these financial goods, and housing, and riches. Is it a good thing to go back to tents? I think not. This is a curse.

He's saying, you know, as the days of the appointed feast, the feast of tabernacles, that they would be in the little tents to remind them of being in the desert and God preserving them in the desert. Here, it's going to become oppression upon them, for they will lose everything, because the Assyrian army is coming. That's the picture here.

It's going to be turned on its head. That which was a blessing, a holy feast day, to honor God, will now become a day of mourning for them. And again, verse 10, as I summarized before, I have also spoken by the prophets, and I've multiplied visions.

I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets. And then verse 13, prophet of the Lord that brought them out of Egypt. So, he mentions prophets several times in this short order here, verses 9 through 13, to highlight his involvement in their lives, and warning them, and encouraging them, and giving them the gospel as well through the mouth of the prophets, such as Hosea, of course.

God is caring for them, in other words. He's not just bringing this up as an historical oddity or interest. Kind of neat, God use a prophet.

The purpose is to wake them up, right? Look what I've done for you. Look what I've given you over and over again, because I do care for you. Do not flee from me, but flee back to me.

And the urging, of course, by these men of God is that they would repent. And so, they would be given and often had miracles as we've gone through 1st and 2nd Kings, Elijah and Elisha's miracles and the like. We don't read much in the case of Hosea, of course.

It doesn't matter. That's just icing on the cake, we say. God doesn't have to give them miracles.

There's nothing guaranteed for that. He rather did it because their faith is so weak. They want something more than just the word of the Lord.

We were reading through the Year of the Bible. It's a softback I got somewhere, and it's designed every day. It breaks up the Bible parts, Old Testament, New Testament, so it's nice and goes through.

And yeah, you know, John the Baptist, his father asked, he's the priest. He's like, hey, so what's the evidence? Give me some signs that this is going to happen. Gabriel's like, well, here's your sign.

You're going to be mute. Do you remember the Kings in the Old Testament asked that as well? Hezekiah wanted a sign, and God could have said, wasn't it enough that Isaiah said it's going to be so? You're going to be healthy? So it's God's decision sometimes. And apparently in the New Testament time, God's like, you should know better by now.

Don't you know your history? You're going to be mute. God sends these miracles. He sends these visions and these signs as he wills, when he wills.

And sometimes he basically says, you asking for it, you're going to get it. You're going to get mute. You're going to get some punishment.

You know, a slap on the wrist, we would say today, metaphorically. This is what's going on when these people don't take seriously God, but God will judge them. I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets as well, probably a parallel idea of visions or miracles and the like, again, for their weak faith, something physical, something tangible, something they can see.

The Lord was acting, as we saw in 2 Timothy this morning, in a way considering their weaknesses, strength, considering the weakness of others, their weakness here, when he could have just simply given up on them. They're not worth the effort. God's grace is greater than our sins.

Destruction of the idols, verse 11, although Gilead has idols, though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal. Indeed, their altar shall be heaps in the furrows of the field, furrows, right? Digging in because the enemy, that is Assyrians, going to come through and just destroy everything. And we have historical evidence of that.

I read some of that on Wednesday night, in which they bragged about taking out all the pagans and their gods in the Palestinian area. And they're going after the God of Israel. Of course, they failed and they lost and never captured Jerusalem because God preserved them.

God's going to take away their idols here. They have rejected the Lord's public honor, and so he will reject their worship against him. It was not simply a matter of lack of carefulness.

That happens today. There is a lot of Christians, our new believers and the like, who are simply ignorant and don't understand what it means to properly honor and worship God. They think anything kind of goes, so it's a kind of a free-for-all at times in their life.

But this is different for these Jews. They knew better. They had God's Word.

They had the prophets over and over again, generation after generation, as we have read. And so by this point, it's clearly willful disobedience. And the punishment of God shows that.

The depth of the sin, the heinousness of it, is so bad that we never hear from the ten tribes ever again. After the fall of Samaria, there's nothing more in the New Testament era. They're just gone.

Jacob's metaphor here, verse 12, he fled the country of Syria, gives a short little summary of his life, and served for a spouse, as we know, for many years. He got the right wife and the like. It's a reminder of their origins and the idea of an implied contrast.

If you boast of your riches and nobility, you seem to reproach your father who was a poor fugitive and a servant in a strange land, which he was. That's what's going on in that verse. That's a quote from the Geneva Notes from the 1500s.

And so it reminds us of the importance of shared history. We here in our church this evening have a shared American history, which intertwines much with church history, as we know, the First and Second Great Awakening, for example, and the like, and the churches that we have that have been established in this nation, the Presbyterians and the like. And so we can speak this way and hearken back to our shared history as they hearken back to Jacob, to remind them that he was a humble man, you ought to be humble.

We have humble origins in America as well. We should not be so proudful and think how wonderful we are. We're the cat's meow.

I had a little discussion with some British friends a few weeks ago and we were talking about who has the best empire, and I conceded right up front. I said, I think the British empire was probably the best at its apex. They had much to commend them in so many ways and their rich Christian heritage and the like.

But I think we're a close second. He kind of laughed. He goes, no, there's other nations.

I wasn't going to argue with him because it's not really worth it. We recognize, although we're playing with one another, that these nations are limited. Our time in this world is limited.

And although we can have, as it were, a godly pride that this is great, that God has blessed us in this regard, in that sense, but we know and we should recognize that we are very weak and we need God's might and his mercy upon us. Are we emulating the best, in other words, of our history, of our shared history, of our forefathers? The power of the prophets. Verse 13, by a prophet, the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt and by a prophet, he was preserved.

Moses. They know who it is. Now, Moses is quite interesting.

The job and the function that he had, both as a priest initially, insofar as he prayed for the people a few times and saved them and delivered them. That's the function of a priest. He's also like a king.

He led them out of Egypt and protected them by God's power. But he was known primarily as what? A prophet. That was his office, especially.

And as such, he's a picture of our Lord and Savior, who is the prophet of all prophets, as prophesied and promised, excuse me, by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. I will raise up a greater prophet and none shall be like him ever again. Jesus is our prophet.

He is our priest and he is our king. He guides us out of spiritual Egypt, the slavery of sin and transgression, and preserves us with the truth of the gospel and gives us the illumination of the power of the Holy Spirit. He is our prophet, has brought us out of spiritual Egypt, and by a prophet, we are preserved, not just saved at the beginning and leaves us alone.

We're on our own. That's it. But rather, he's continued to be with us and preserves us by the power of the Holy Spirit, by the truth of his word.

That's why it's important to read the Bible, to memorize the Bible, to pray in accordance with the Bible, to have our life guided by the truth therein, for that's how Christ preserves us as a prophet. And the power of the king is through the truth of the prophet as well in his ministry. Now, there's no prophets today, of course.

We have pastors, ministers, preachers, who teach and warn and encourage one another. May we not, we pray, emulate Ephraim with the false worship of greed, but be humbled by the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what we are called to do here in these verses.

Deadly Warning Against Sin

The deadly warning against sin, verse 14 at the very end. They are provoking God. That's clearly a human description of what they are doing, poking God in the eye, as it were, like a rebellious child.

The Bible, as we recall, was created for us, not for God, as though God needed a book. It's for our sake this was put together. And He uses our own tongue, our own way of speaking, our own way of thinking and describing things as well to bring about cosmic and spiritual truths that we can better understand.

So often God describes what's going on with human emotions, human terms, human body parts. He talks about God having an eye, a nose even, that's the idea of wrath there, it's flaring nostrils, that's the picture there in Hebrew, or His arms, right outstretched arm of might and power for His people to wake us up to the realities of what God is doing for us. So the idea here then is that Ephraim's sin was so heinous it was though they could vex very God Himself, who of course has no emotions, is not vexed like we are and just ticked off at the last minute.

That's not how God is. But that's how bad their sins were. It's as though God fell into that, as it were, but He didn't.

It's His divine justice, it's His perfection, it's His righteousness that they are fighting against. They are sinning, transgressing, and keeping it up, and God's gonna punish them. That's the picture.

It's gonna happen. Now we provoke the Lord if we persist after repeated warnings over and over again, and God will judge, who will bring punishment upon us as a father does to the children, as a session does to wayward members of the church. That's why members of the session together as a court try to emulate the patience of the Lord God Almighty, but of course we're not gonna wait generations as the God did.

We can't wait generations. We shouldn't even wait years upon years. We must do something, but we still will have some patience, for we desire the conversion and the change of heart of those we are punishing, and God's doing the same thing here.

Although provoked, even most bitterly as it were, and God will leave them to the guilt of their bloodshed upon them, that they will have consequences of their actions. That's how people learn. That's how we learn.

If we get away with everything, we're not going to grow up, we're not going to change as believers. He leaves them in their guilt, He describes it here, a horrific picture for those who are unrepentant, for the Lord is saying, you are cast out of my good graces if you are left to your own guilt. There is no atonement for those who do not trust in Jesus and are left to their own guilt, but not so for those who are godly and return to Him.

So the description here, as I've mentioned before, in the strong language as though this is it, there is no redemption for them, is twofold. It is for those who are unrepentant, very dangerous. God leaves them, there's no more physical protection, they're not going to be in the land anymore, they're being driven off to the four corners because the Assyrians will take them out of the country and scatter them to the four winds.

And if they are unrepentant, they will go to hell. But for those who are His, and they will repent, for God uses these hardships to bring about repentance, this leaving them to their own guilt is but temporary. It's a way of describing, again, you're left to the consequences of your own devices, we say.

You do these stupid, silly things, you're going to have stupid, silly consequences and effects in your life. And God does that as a father to a child. Return His approach upon Him, we describe here the very last verse here, or clause at verse 14 at the very end, just means blame or shame, that is the word reproach, that Ephraim will feel the effects of his blame and his bloodshed.

Whatever that bloodshed may be, probably some actual murder, although it could be other things that require the death penalty, it's not always murder in Durham Code, as you remember. So the punishment here is not because God is petty and angry, as a petty, angry man, but rather He is bringing about justice in their lives and sanctification for the elect and proper punishment for the non-elect. They need to go through this.

They should not be confused what's going on. The prophet is telling them, you deserve this, and leaves it hanging, what, are you going to repent or not? Now, we should not confuse hardship that occurs in life with always something wrong in our life, that is, we are sinning. But we do know that hardships, one way or the other, are there for our growth and maturation.

Israel punishment, brothers and sisters here, was for false worship, yes, over and over again. He hammers that point here in the other prophets, but also for exploiting one another, of deceitful scales, of loving to financially and economically oppress one another because they're greedy and consumed with materialism. They're acting wickedly like cunning Canaanites, and they knew better.

May we resist the temptation to cheat and to deceive, to make excuses for those who cheat and deceive, or, more broadly, to be suckered into lusting after money and prosperity. Let us stay alert to the temptations around us with prayer and humility, brothers and sisters, and may the spirit of truth preserve us from foolishness and greed. Let us pray.

Father God above, we indeed pray for this fact. We certainly wish to reject and eschew all false worship, but also all violations of the second table towards one another, but rather on the flip side, enact and show love and care and help, especially for those who are poor and needy. Father God, we ask for more of your spirit, more understanding and compassion, as well as a proper balance in our Christian life, we pray by our Lord and Savior.

Amen.