

Your Help Is From the LORD

Let us turn to our text to Hosea chapter 13 verses 9 through 16. Hosea chapter 13. Hosea chapter 13, so that's near the end there.

One more chapter to go. Verses 9 and following, let us listen attentively to the word of God. O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from me.

I will be your king. Where is any other that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, give me a king and princes. I gave you a king in my anger.

I took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up. His sin is stored up.

The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him. He is an unwise son, for he shall not stay long where children are born. I will ransom them from the power of the grave.

I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be your plagues. O grave, I will be your destruction.

Pity is hidden from my eyes. Though he is fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come. The wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness.

Then his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize. Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God.

They shall fall by the sword. Their infants shall be dashed to pieces, and their women with child ripped open. Let us pray.

With these strong words, terrifying words at the end, God, may we not lose sight of the opening part of this section of the Word of God, that their help, our help, is from you, and you will be our King. Father God, may the Spirit be upon us this evening, preaching of the Word, that we would be strengthened and convicted as needed to turn our eyes back upon you and to remember and always know that our help is from the Lord. Amen.

So that is the title of the sermon, Help is from the Lord, or Your Help is from the Lord. He says here in verse 1, but your help is from me, me obviously being the Lord God of the covenant. Like before, we have some good news from the prophet here, mixed with bad.

Yet this is the way of man until the Lord creates a new heaven and a new earth, for we are a fallen race. Yes, even Christians still sin, and we do not deserve even to be alive right now, yet God's mercy is upon us, even upon the unbelievers, for they are still here and able to hear the message of the truth around us. Yet the Lord's patience is great indeed, as he sustains all things for the sake of the elect.

Here we witness more of the patience and the kindness and stark warnings, in particular here, to wake them up, for it is a kindness from God, as it is a kindness for us. When your house is on fire, to come and warn you, but also to encourage those who listen there and

listen now, with open and humble hearts, with the good news of the saving of their soul. The good news, especially climaxes there in verse 14.

Help Is From The LORD

So the first point, help is from the Lord, verses 9 through 14. The background explaining some of this help, as I said, culminating there in verse 14. In verse 9, he alludes there to their destruction, O Israel, you are destroyed, or in the process of being destroyed, for the invading armies, the Assyrian army, is coming upon them.

Even then, or pretty soon at the time, first they were invaded by Syria, and even Egypt had caused harassment upon them, if you recall, through first and second kings. The Lord is using the nations of this world at that time, even today, to discipline his church and discipline his people, for they have been collectively in perpetual sin, rebellion against him. So the earthly tangible things, as we saw this morning, he uses for good, such as the Lord's Supper, and the bread and the wine, but also here for punishment, political enemies and the like.

And of course, it's their sins in particular that have destroyed them. This was the material cause, them seeking out help from foreign armies when they shouldn't have. Also, instead of relying upon the God of the covenant and his word and the like, they made treaties with these pagan nations, and went even further, as we know, even before they made the treaties, they were worshiping Baal and other gods.

So there were a number of sinful causes for their perpetual punishment by God, it seems, upon them, or in this case, their oncoming destruction from the Assyrian army. And naturally, because of this, they see the enemy coming, they've been warned about the enemy, they want help. And God says, I will help you.

But in contrast to the destruction coming upon you now, I will help you, I can deliver you, for help is from me, and I will be your king. So verses 9 and 10 clearly go together. Help is from me, help is only from the Lord.

As we saw last week, there was only one God and one Savior and one Deliverer, and that's applied here as well. For who can deliver them from their distress? Only the Lord God, only the great King of kings and Lord of lords can bring about such a great salvation. For he will be their king, common theme in the Bible.

Today, I suppose you may think, well, I guess the equivalent, you have what, what is it, Living Bible or something, they like to make it really modern. And so they come along, and I suppose they might say something like, I will be your president. I will be your judge or something.

And I hope you see how much of a punch is lost there, because our president doesn't really have a lot of power compared to the kings of old. They were nigh omnipotent as far as humans were concerned. They were judge, jury, executioner sometimes, all wrapped in one.

They were the representatives, the judge, and the president, all wrapped in one. That was the oriental king. Very powerful.

A despot is where the word comes from. It didn't always mean a bad thing. Today, despot always means a bad thing, but it didn't always mean a bad thing back then.

It just meant someone very powerful. And of course, they're hoping it's powerful for our good. And if you remember also, the idea of a king is tied closely to a shepherd, that he is often depicted as one who protects and broods over his flock, their nation.

Here, of course, the Jewish people, but the pagans also had a similar language as well. So when God says, help us from me, and then ties it to the fact that he is king, that means something. It's very significant.

It's very powerful. The omnipotent God, the creator of heaven and earth, will stretch out his right hand and deliver his people. I can do it because I am your king.

I'm the only king. I'm the only one who can save you. I'm a powerful, omnipotent, all-powerful.

Presidents and police officers can do only so much in this world, but a king can do all their jobs. And of course, God can do even more than an earthly king. And he slides from this picture of, I will be your king.

Where is any other? There's this question that he may save you in all your cities. Where is another king who's going to do this for you? Who's your deliverer? Who's your savior? Parallel ideas of kingship? Nobody. Only as Lord and king, he has the power inherent within him to deliver them body as well as soul.

For this will slide in from social economic concern about being invaded and having their economy destroyed and their houses destroyed, earthly concerns, which are significant, important as it is to be sure. And he's going to go right into a more significant matter in verse 14, the soul, the saving of the soul, even to the grave and death itself. We don't like kings in America, but for the saving of our souls, we want a king.

We should have a king. We do have a king. That's why it's so offensive when Christians talk about like God is a Santa Claus in the sky or wring their hands or they think he's wringing his hands and impotence waiting upon man.

They don't see God as an all powerful king. They see him as perhaps a president that we voted for. Did you choose Jesus? Did you vote for him? Is he Lord over your life? Did you make him Lord over your heart? No, he was already Lord.

You were in rebellion against his Lordship. Lord is but another word for king. Yes, back then you might have distinction, different cultures of prince versus the Lord, but it's all the same as far as we're concerned.

So as far as the imagery is concerned, Jesus is prince just means he's all powerful. He's a royalty above you, a king that does his own divine will. That's the savior that we need, and that's the savior we will get and have gotten.

So this hope is not only for them, but for ourselves, of course, ultimately. He is loving and patient with us as a king slash shepherd is in that imagery, and he will save us as he has promised even his own people. And of course he does.

He preserves a remnant. They will have an ultimate punishment upon them. As we know, they will fall.

We had just finished up second Kings and that finishes with the fall of Jerusalem, and they're all taken into captivity by the Babylonians. No one else can do this. Where is any other that he may save you and all your cities and your judges to whom you said, give me kings and princes, verse 10.

Clearly, these are rhetorical questions emphasizing and highlighting there's no one else to my equal like me. You keep going to these Egyptians or maybe trying to make a special deal with the Syrians. They did it a couple times, you recall there in Kings.

No, no, you're being foolish. Trust in me. I am the king, the king of kings and lord of lords.

And the parallel here you see, right, between kings and judges. Where is your king, any other that can save you, or in your judges to whom you have said, give me a king or a prince, and then he slides back into 1 Samuel, alluding there, right, of making a king. I gave you a king in my anger at Saul and David, and like he made the whole kingly line.

They wanted to be like the pagans around them. God give us a king, we don't want judges anymore. Remember that? They weren't satisfied with what God had given them already from the beginning.

And so God gave them that kingly line, used it for good, although they wished it for evil. And it becomes a picture of Jesus and his kingdom. But he eventually takes the office away and took him, the king, away in my wrath.

Clearly king here in the singular must refer to the whole line of the kingship of that rule idea there that they had. And it's all be taken away at the very end of the Babylonian captivity. It's gone.

And it's now gone forever. It's completely taken away. It's a done fact as far as the prophet is concerned.

It's going to happen. I gave you a king and took him away in my wrath. You don't believe it's going to happen.

I'm telling you it's going to happen. It's happening already because the enemy is coming down upon you to take you and your families and your nation into captivity. Verses 12 and

13, the iniquity of Ephraim goes back again into their sins, has bound up, his sin is stored up, reminding them again, of course, of their stubbornness in so many different ways.

Their stubbornness that leads to death and destruction. For she, verse 16, has rebelled against her God. In other words, they refuse to repent and change their ways.

The mass of them are hardened in their hearts. And so the mass of them will be taken away and they will lose their country. And he describes this as the sorrow of a woman in childbirth.

The sorrow of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him. And then he interrupts the idea. He is an unwise son.

Very nice way of saying it. He's foolish. You see that elsewhere in the Bible.

It's very strong language here. It's a little nicer. Unwise son, for he should not stay long where children are born.

An awkward, strange phrase, at least in the English. What's he talking about? Where the place where children are born or the breaking forth of children, the place of breaking forth of children is giving birth. Picture of the description of giving birth, of a woman giving birth.

Children come through the canal, right? That's what he's referring to. And them not coming forth and ultimately dying. They're stillborn in their spiritual life.

That's what he's alluding to here in this verse. Description of their persistence in their sins, putting off the fullness of repentance, that they should leave the matrix of sin, but instead give a half-hearted repentance. A half-hearted repentance is just a stillborn repentance.

For he should not stay long in the birth canal. You stay too long, you're going to die. That's the picture.

And they're going to die. They're going to be punished collectively and of course individually. One of the interesting dynamics as we've gone through the prophets is he doesn't make a lot of distinctions.

Like, well, I'm really talking to the unrepentant. He's just speaking out very broadly to his all his dire audience, right? But remember, he speaks as only the spirit can, both broadly and hitting everyone who's unrepentant, but also hitting those who are repentant. So individually, there are differences.

They hear this and they respond and they're given encouragement to some of these words. Like, I will be your king. Your help is from me.

And they grasp this truth and they rejoice in the goodness they're in. And so when they hear this, that they are like stillborn children, there's this suffering of childbirth that eventually ends up in the death of a child, or in this case, the death of their full repentance. I'm sure it

hits them hard, but not so hard that they give up on hope, but rather cling more closely to Jesus.

So that's the imagery here. Yet the Lord continues to offer astounding hope in spite of this grim picture of verse 13 of a stillborn child. I will ransom them from the power of the grave.

I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be your plague. O grave, I will be your destruction.

He's moving here into the spiritual realm from the physical realm. I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death.

The fleshly, unrepentant Jews who heard this probably thought, oh, we're going to win. We're not going to die. The grave isn't going to take us.

And we'll be just fine. Oh boy, they're going to be surprised when the Assyrians come along and they lost it all. And of course, the Babylonians come later, that's the end of all that.

They missed it. They were not seeing with the eye of faith, but with the eye of the flesh. But we know this is the true help that they need, that the demise of their kingdom, the outward kingdom, the Jewish kingdom is of course sad indeed.

Yet the consequences of eternal death are worse. Matthew 20, 28. In Matthew 20, 28, we read, the son of man that gave his life a ransom for many.

How will God overcome death and the grave? I will ransom them from the power of the grave, God tells us, and I will ransom them through the death of my son. That's what he's talking about. That's what he's pointing to in the heart of the believer who hears this.

He sees his own sins at this time. And even today, if you hear this and you hopefully hear with the ears of faith and see that it points to Jesus, that's what's going to happen. I will ransom, I will deliver them, I will save them.

It's a fulfillment of Hosea as Christ, our Redeemer. He offered his life in our stead and he took our punishment and death and he conquered death at the resurrection. You overcome sin with righteousness, you overcome death with life, you overcome the grave with the resurrection.

So although the resurrection isn't explicitly mentioned here, it's implied. How else will God do this? That's how he'll do it. We know that, of course, from other texts and ultimately from history.

He conquers sin and death, brothers and sisters. This is good news. This is happy times.

They should hear this and although the Assyrians are to come and conquer them and beat them up, the faithful believer says, it doesn't matter. At the end of the day, my father has told me even death itself will not hold me. So there is a resurrection, contrary to the Sadducees.

For them, they're sad, you see. I was not taught that as a kid. I heard that later from Mrs. Coppins.

I was, ah, that's pretty clever. I like that. They didn't believe in a resurrection.

They weren't listening to this text very clearly. They were very much earthly in that regard. We praise the Lord for such a wonderful gospel truth.

It's quoted in 1 Corinthians 15.5, as you may recall. I'll get to that in a second. I want to note one thing here, that this demonstrates that Jesus is divine from the prophecy from God.

How the King will bring the saving of the soul and conquer sin and hell itself is a spiritual fact. It requires divine power to overcome death. And so he who will overcome death, Jesus, must be more than merely a man.

And thus implies the two persons, two natures in one person, excuse me, two divine natures in one person. And also with respect to the Holy Trinity, there's a Father and there's a Son. And the Spirit, of course, is the third member of the Trinity.

1 Corinthians 15.55, O death, where is your sting? O Hades, or grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. The strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is Paul the Apostle explaining this text several hundred years later in the New Testament. It is Jesus who fulfills this promise. He, as our cosmic King, overcame sin, overcame death in his resurrection and his ascension.

He doesn't stay here on earth with his earthly body, but a special body, a resurrected body that we will also inherit as well, a body that cannot and will not die. This body is slowly dying. We see it, and it's sad to see around us.

It's hard as we feel it. But death is not the end, brothers and sisters. The grave is but just the beginning, for God has destroyed it.

God has weakened it to nothing and has no power over us. We are redeemed from death. That is the ultimate power of death, of dying and being dead and in hell forever.

The Jews of Hosea's time, of course, were worried about the Assyrian army, but the Lord directs them to something more important. Their heart should pay attention, not to the physical delivery of the body and the nation, but the spiritual delivery of the soul. Man only sees the outward, unfortunately.

Sinful man is very superficial, but God sees the true needs that we need, the demise of death itself. A little note here, you may notice the language is a little different from Paul than it is here in Hosea. Matthew Henry notes, but the word which we translate, I will may as well be rendered.

Now, where now are thy plagues? So it can be taken as a question. And so the apostle took it, O death, where is thy plague or with which thou hast so long pestered the world? O grave, where is thy victory or thy destruction? Wherewith thou hast destroyed mankind? So it can be slightly looked at differently. I don't want to get into the details there, but Paul's taking it that way for a purpose, of course, a theological point to unpack the significance of the Old Testament text.

And it reminds us as well that quoting the Bible verbatim is not a magic incantation. You can quote it as a paraphrase. Or extend an example and some usage and application from it.

You see this a number of times in the Apostle Paul or even Christ in the New Testament. So don't, in other words, get too hung up sometimes as though, what's going on? No, of course the context is relevant. If you're claiming to quote it verbatim and you haven't, you may be corrected.

But often we don't. We just give a paraphrase of something of the Bible, and that's fine. That's fine.

But it's a wonderful truth. Let's not lose sight of that fact. God Almighty promised them the spiritual Israel of old, because they were not ransomed from death.

Many of them died in the conflict to come. But the ransoming of their soul, because God is, of course, especially concerned about the soul of man. I've come, John 4, Jesus tells us, to bring this people that you would worship Him in spirit and in truth.

And God is a spirit. He must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. That highlights again, it emphasizes it's the spirituality that is very significant.

We must not lose sight of that as we read much of the external concerns here in the Old Testament. And they must therefore repent and trust in the Messiah to come of the promised seed. And likewise for ourselves, we see trouble coming.

Thankfully, we don't see an army coming from the north. Canada's evading us or something. But rather, we have other problems, spiritual problems and the like, to be sure.

And we must never forget that even death itself, the greatest of all hardships, has been conquered by Jesus. And if that's been conquered by Jesus, the things that you're dealing with right now, and they're real, and we shouldn't ignore them, will pale in comparison when He returns. It's going to all go away.

The hardships of our body, the trials and tribulations that we go through as Christians, are used for our good, of course. To put in a final perspective, they pale compared to the great persecution, hardship of death. And Christ has conquered that.

So we should not be fearful of what we have to go through, but stand firm and cling to Christ as best we can, knowing that even if we fail in our obedience and our repentance, that He has not failed.

Discipline Is From the LORD

Discipline is from the Lord, verses 15 through 16. Though He is fruitful, that is, the Jewish church at the time, among His brethren, and each one shall come, and the one of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and the spring shall become dry and the like.

Picture of the impending punishment that God is going to call, bring upon them. The allusion here, of course, is to their relative prosperity, fruitfulness among His brethren here, that God has indeed blessed them materially. I went over this a couple of times through Hosea, that one of the smaller sub-themes is how good they had it in this world, economically, and the prosperity they have and the goodness and the blessings that they used to forget God and to have riotous living and even ignore their neighbors or steal from their neighbors and hate their neighbors.

They kept on sinning, thinking God had blessed them so everything was okay. Yet judgment is swift and drawing nigh like a rushing wind, and each one shall come, the one of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, because God directs the armies of the world and the nations of the world and the enemies of the church for the good of His people. God is behind this, does not catch them off guard.

Springs and fountains, of course, shall dry up is another picture of punishments and destruction coming upon them. Drought for the enemy, of course, is destroying all things, or a broad metaphor for fruitlessness of all things. Everything's drying up, whether it be literally water or everything related to water, food, or everything even partly related to that, which should be the blessings of material world around us.

The evasion's coming and bad things are coming. And then at the end here, we have this ugly picture in verse 16, 16b, where he drives home the point, and the point behind all this is the point of repentance, of turning away from their wicked life, of turning back to God lest they perish, not just their body, but especially their soul. That judgment is coming.

It's a real judgment. It's a painful judgment because of their guilt, both collective and individual, of their rebellion against God, high-handed rebellion. Sometimes, I've mentioned this before, people sometimes talk about, well, you've got idols in your heart, and that may be the case, literally, that you have another God that you're, ah, maybe I like this version of God versus that version of God.

That happens. People have this temptation. But we're using that more metaphorically, and sometimes we use it too much, it seems to me.

You water down the idea of what real idolatry is about. They replace God with another God, or no God at all, atheism. And so with the use of the word rebellion.

Well, I've been rebellious this week. Have you? Have you really? You just ran around, ignored your family, and kicked your dog, and hated on your neighbor, and lied, and did that? No. You were struggling as a believer.

This is high-handed rebellion. One generation after another, one prophet after another saying, what are you doing with this kind of worship? Why are you sacrificing your children? And they're like, we're just going to do it. We don't care.

In fact, we think God's blessing us. But whatever they're doing, it's high-handed rebellion. 1 Samuel 15, 23.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as the iniquity of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you from being king. Verse 16, Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God.

It's not a one-time thing. It's who they are. It goes to the heart of the matter, just like King Saul.

He's just like, I'm going to do whatever I feel like. And he does it over, and over, and over again, in a high-handed way, in a public way. And so, God will bring upon them the horrors of war.

And such a description, such a description should wake them up. That's the point. It's a horrid picture.

I read it once. I won't read it again. Of what they did in war.

What the Assyrians would do, and other nations would do. They were merciless. And unfortunately, it happened before as well.

In 2 Kings 15, 6, we have a similar description in early Israel of them going after women. Unfortunately, I see things like that in the news as well. Today, even in America, with trafficking of people.

The discipline here, the point in the last few verses, is that discipline is from the Lord. The discipline of God, the punishment of God, more narrowly, I mean discipline again in the broader sense of how a parent is concerned about the child, and will discipline them, either verbally or instruct them sometimes. It doesn't have to be spanking.

It can be just verbal explanation of things. The positive and the negative. Here, of course, especially negative.

Because when you're a rebellious teenager, you've probably seen this, I'm sure. Maybe you went through it yourself. But I've certainly seen it.

The parent has to be even harder on them, doesn't he? Because they're not listening. You're being nice to begin with. You eventually accelerate, and you have to get harder and harder upon them until something snaps, and they submit.

But they will not submit. It's a hardness of heart. So God disciplines the body.

He brings lean times economically and socially upon them, and of course, even upon us today. Many of the punishments, I'll remind us again, as I went through Deuteronomy a couple years ago on Wednesday night, that section on the curses and the blessings of the covenant, mostly curses. There's a lot more curses there.

I itemized, gave a taxonomy of the curses to show us many of them are, for lack of a better term, natural consequences or natural curses or punishment for sin. They're not supernatural, like something signed from heaven that you would never expect, but natural. And this is natural as well.

We have economic and social decay around us, and often we can point to the source of that because of wicked, sinful men. Something comes out of nowhere. What kind of punishment is that? Well, this kind of punishment makes sense.

This is often what we see here. And God uses the enemies that they were playing patty cake with. Earlier kings did that with Babylon when they sent their representative, and he was bragging.

It was Hezekiah. Look at the king. Look at the temple here.

Look at all the glories of God's kingship and all the gold that I have here. What are you doing? So God used their own pride against them to humble them and to humble us if we're too beholden to the world and to sin around us, so that we learn that this life is fleeting, brothers and sisters, and it's passing away, and to renew our trust and hope in Him. It's a discipline of the body, but of course the discipline of the body, of the flesh, of the things around us ties into our soul because it's a temptation.

The body tempts us. People around us and things around us tempt us. And so the discipline of the body is never merely and only about the body.

There's another way of looking at this. When we read through the prophets and God's coming upon them and scourging them with the enemies of war, of drought and the like, scourging what? Their body. It was never about their body.

It was He was trying to affect their soul through their body, through the hardships of their body, so that they would repent. Repentance is an action of the soul first and foremost, isn't it? Of your mind, your will, and your emotions. Not the body.

You can bow your body all you want. Your heart can be hard as stone and never yielding, never bending. So God uses both.

We struggle in our souls with many transgressions, I know, but the Spirit works through both the body and the soul to purify and sanctify us. And so we have things in our life. We have a society in which weird things are hardships and scary things are going on even at times.

God is using it for us to remember sometimes, perhaps, as I try to remind us now and then, that we're limited. There's something, some things we can't. We're like, okay, there they go again doing whatever they feel like they're doing.

I can't stop it. Exactly. What you can do is what you can do in your own backyard.

Repent, change your household, or whatever else we need to do. God Almighty, even in the midst of this punishment for us, if we repent and submit to Him, He is always there as our King, as our help. He helps us, for He is our divine King.

Brothers and sisters, you have troubles both inward and outward, yet your help is from the Lord. He will help you in His way and His time to be sure. He's giving you the tools, He's giving you each other, and especially He's given us His Word that we may cling to Him all the more.

And He is a great help and a greater help and the greatest help against the greatest enemy, death itself. Never forget that. Let us pray.

Father God above, comfort us, strengthen us, bring conviction to us if needed, God, if we've forgotten and been drawn away by the lust of the flesh or the desires of life. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, blessed be Your name. May we always come to You for help, bring our prayers before You, bring our hearts before You, and always and ever, in every way as we can, glorify You and submit to You, we pray, by the blood of Christ, Amen.