



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hosea 13:1-16

“Idolatry, Old and New”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading is Hosea chapter 13 verse 1 through verse 16. It may help to keep in mind the fact that when the prophet uses the term, Ephraim, he is speaking primarily of course of the Northern Kingdom, and then later on he will use the term, Israel, and again the Northern Kingdom is primarily in mind. Occasionally he does make reference to Judah, because many of the same things that were happening in Israel were happening in the Southern Kingdom, though delayed a bit. But it's shortly after this that the Northern Kingdom went into captivity in 722 B.C., so these are verses that were extremely to the people to whom Hosea gave them. Obviously, they didn't pay attention to them, because the captivity came, and these same people to whom he spoke were the recipients of the disciplinary judgment set out in this chapter.

The prophet now writes in verse 1,

“When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling

He exalted himself in Israel,

But through Baal he did wrong and died.

And now they sin more and more,

And make for themselves molten images,

Idols skillfully made from their silver, (Now, the Hebrew text says, literally, idols made from their silver according to their understanding, so “skillfully” is the attempt of the translators to render “according to their own understanding.”)

All of them the work of craftsmen

They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!"

Therefore they will be like the morning cloud

And like dew which soon disappears,

Like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor

And like smoke from a chimney.

Yet I have been the LORD your God

Since the land of Egypt;

And you were not to know any god except Me,

For there is no savior besides Me.

I cared for you in the wilderness,

In the land of drought. (Incidentally, in the Hebrew text there is a little bit of stress upon that “I” of verse 5; *I* cared for you.)

As they had their pasture, they became satisfied,

And being satisfied, their heart became proud;

Therefore they forgot Me.

So I will be like a lion to them;

Like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside.

I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs,

And I will tear open their chests;

There I will also devour them like a lioness,

As a wild beast would tear them.

It is your destruction, O Israel,

That you are against Me, against your help.

Where now is your king
That he may save you in all your cities,
And your judges of whom you requested,
"Give me a king and princes"?
I gave you a king in My anger
And took him away in My wrath.

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up;
His sin is stored up.

The pains of childbirth come upon him;
He is not a wise son,

For it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb. (He refers there to an infant having difficulty in being born, and of course what he has in mind is repentance, and he says the failure to repent is like the failure of the fetus to make its way out of the womb and be born; in other words, a peril both to the fetus and to the mother, so it’s a very descriptive term.)

I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol.

I shall redeem them from death.

O Death, where are your thorns?

O Sheol, where is your sting? (You know, it’s always interesting to me to read a text like this because it doesn’t take much reading of the New Testament to remember that this is a passage that Paul cites in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and so Paul was a student of Hosea chapter 13 – that’s always meaningful to me to realize that we are studying something that our Lord, he cites from Hosea, and Paul also studied.)

Compassion will be hidden from My sight.”

Now people like to say and think, if I could just understand the Greek text and the Hebrew text then the Bible would be so simple and plain. Young men come to

theological seminaries where they do teach languages. Many of them do not teach the languages anymore, but if they teach languages they say, “If I could learn Greek, the Bible will become clear and plain to me. And if I learn Hebrew, well, I have the tools for understanding all of the word.”

Well, it’s nice to have the tools. I believe in it. I think you should study them. And more than most seminaries study them these days, even the evangelical ones. They don’t have enough. They don’t have enough at Dallas Seminary. And they have quite a bit at Dallas. It’s very essential.

But one thing you learn when you learn Greek and Hebrew is that that does not solve all of your problems. As a matter of fact, you learn problems that exist in the translations of texts that you didn’t know, because while the Greek solved some of your questions and while the Hebrew solved some of your questions, it also introduces you to new problems that you didn’t realize, because you have not been reading anything but the English text. We always have to do exegesis, and that’s a word of comfort for you who do not know Greek and Hebrew, because ultimately exegetical questions are almost always solved by careful analysis of the context. And ordinarily, one does not need to know the languages in order to analyze the context.

Now it so happens that this statement, “Compassion will be hidden from my sight,” maybe taken as a statement of judgment. In other words, let’s render verse 14 with question marks. “Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? Oh death, were are thy thorns; O Sheol where is your sting? Compassion will be hid from my sight.” And this God is following through according to the context and speaking in judgment.

It’s also possible to take this as the New American Standard Bible takes it, as a promise. In other words, after the statement of judgment, then the promise. And that’s characteristic of Hosea as we have seen in other places like chapter 1. So therefore it’s possible to take it that way. “I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem

them from death? Oh death, were are thy thorns; O Sheol where is your sting?
Compassion will be hid from my sight.”

One might ask, compassion for what? Well, compassion toward death and Sheol just mentioned in the preceding two lines. In other words, he’s going to do away with death and Sheol, and he’s going to ransom them from the power of Sheol.

Or, it’s possible as the New International Version – Mr. Pryor likes to bring it to the meetings. He doesn’t have it today but, if you have the New International Version, you’ll notice that last line is separated in space from the other four lines of verse 14 because it’s taken with the following context, and so verse 14 concludes with a promise, with, O Sheol, where is your sting? And then judgment continues with verse 15, but the last line of verse 14 begins it,

“Compassion will be hid from my sight,
Though he flourishes among the reeds,
An east wind will come,
The wind of the LORD coming up from the wilderness;
And his fountain will become dry
And his spring will be dried up;
It will plunder his treasury of every precious article.
Samaria will be held guilty,
For she has rebelled against her God
They will fall by the sword,
Their little ones will be dashed in pieces,
And their pregnant women will be ripped open.”

We’ll take it for the purposes of our exposition as the New American Standard Bible has it, as a promise, and the compassion that is referred to here in the line, “Compassion will

be hid from my sight,” is compassion toward Sheol and Hades. God will truly bring Israel into the possession ultimately into the unconditional promises. Let us bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words that have come to us from the Prophet Hosea, because they speak to us in 1984 so vividly and so personally. We recognize, Lord, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as we think about the fact that so many hundreds of years ago, the prophet speaking about his own day and the problems of it, also speaks to us just as plainly and clearly as Thou dost through the Spirit give us spiritual ears to hear.

We are grateful to Thee today, Lord, for the gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and for the assurance of everlasting life through him. And we confess, Lord, that we have so often failed Thee. Failed Thee as an entire Christian church, and we pray for the entire Christian church today. Failed as a local church, and we pray for Believers Chapel, for its elders and deacons and friends. O God, may Thy hand be upon its ministry for good. Deliver us from our sins and weaknesses and our failures to use the opportunities that are ours.

And then Lord, we pray concerning our personal lives, for we, too, have so often sinned against Thee. We confess our indifference, our lethargy, the fact that we have not arranged our priorities properly. The fact that the Lord God often does not have first place in our lives, except in our lips, and we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt forgive us and Thou wilt transform us by Thy mighty power through the Holy Spirit, and may this assembly of believers be, Lord, a torch for Jesus Christ in the days in which we live.

We pray that the Holy Spirit may bless the ministry of the word of God to the salvation of souls and to the strengthening and consoling and establishing of the believers in Jesus Christ. O God, bless all of the ministries of the Chapel. Bless its radio ministry, its publications ministry, its Bible classes, its various programs. Its tape ministry,

particularly. We pray also for the daily Vacation Bible School and the other classes and ministries that are part of the work of this local church.

Lord, we are grateful for all of the provision that Thou hast made for us. We’re thankful and grateful. We know that we do not deserve Thy blessing, but Lord, in order to magnify Thy name and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, bless the ministry of this assembly.

And we ask, Lord, those whose names are in our calendar of concern and the problems and the concerns expressed there, Lord, minister to all who are involved. Bring healing where necessary, and strengthening, and also give guidance and direction. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the opportunity of this hour. May it be fruitful in the lives of each of us. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] When we come to Hosea chapter 13, we are coming to the climax of Hosea’s prophecies of doom, but not the climax of the book itself. The climax of the book itself will be given in the last chapter.

It’s not surprising that when we come to the climax of the prophecies of doom, that idolatry emerges. And it’s not surprising to my mind, either, that we find, when we turn to the New Testament, idolatry is one of the things in which the apostles are interested because it really is a contemporary problem.

For example, the Apostle Paul in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 5 speaks about covetousness which is idolatry. And then in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in chapter 5 and verse 5, he says the same thing. “Writing for this you know with certainty that no immoral or impure person or covetous man *who is an idolater* [emphasis added] has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” And then I’m sure that most of you in this audience know that when the Apostle John writes his first epistle, years later he still felt it necessary to conclude his epistle with, “Little children, keep yourself from idols.”

It raises the question of the Christian’s worldview, or as the Germans like to say, the Christian’s *weltanschauer*, or his outlook on the world. Yesterday, I was reading a publication that I get, and the editor, it’s sort of a financial publication, and the editor has

a section in it in which is mainly contained news, but he had a quotation from someone who had written him a letter, and it went like this, “Dear Howard, why (no reference to Mr. Pryor [laughter] are you always trying to sell us other newsletters, coins, books and cruises? All you care about is getting rich. You’re greedy. A subscriber.” [Laughter]

And then the editor went on to say, “Letters like this really bother me because of the anti-free enterprise theme, and I get a few just like it every week. The writer assumes that it’s wrong to be motivated by profit. Unfortunately, tens of millions of Americans share my pen pal’s attitude, and they are destroying the American dream. Whether or not your fortune’s tainted depends on how you got it. If money is not all consuming and occupies fifth place in your heart after God, family, country, and integrity, then there’s not a darn thing wrong with having a whole lot of it. [Laughter] If however money comes ahead of those things, then it is a carrier of a loathsome disease, greed. This is not just an elaborate justification for my business efforts. They need no justification. I intend to continue to make money by offering goods and services that I think you’ll like. If you don’t like them, then I think the marketplace will punish me. In the meantime, I hope that you and I become very rich but keep our values straight.”

Well, that’s some pretty good advice from a businessman who doesn’t give us any indication of whether he was a Christian or not, but in any case, he does have some pretty good ideas concerning priorities.

One of the things we learn about human history is that human history is the revelation of the instability of the human race. Change is constantly found, often traced by historians to various kinds of things. If you know anything about history is of course that historians, when they study a particular piece of history, they like to deal with the causes by which certain things come to pass.

For example, if you were studying the history of the United States, you find volumes written on the social history of the United States. You will find volumes on the political history of the United States. And then you will find some volumes on the

economic history of the United States. In other words, attempts usually made by historians to trace the reasons for human events to political or social or economic causes, that’s fair, and it’s a proper source of study. It’s a proper field to be engaged in. And in fact, the study of almost all the history of the earth can be conducted along those lines.

When I was much younger, I was involved in some graduate study at Southern Methodist University. And I took a course in Reformation history from a man who was an agnostic and a socialist. And so consequently, when the Reformation was studied, the things he was interested in were the political events of the time, the social movements of the time, and the economic factors which influenced, in his mind, the Reformation. He didn’t have the slightest idea of what was transpiring spiritually, and so everything was traced to these other types of factors.

In fact, one person in the class one day asked the professor, When Luther was converted? – and he said, “Luther, converted? [Laughter] Luther was always a Christian.” [More laughter]. And what he meant by that simply was that Luther was always attached to a professing Christian church, so it was obvious you would never get from him an understanding of the deep spiritual motivations that moved in the hearts of the Reformers.

So, it’s proper to study the economic, the social, and other causes of things, but ultimately, the real things that move human society are beyond that. And one sees this so clearly here, because you can trace Ephraim’s failure, not to political or economic or social factors, though of course, Assyria had a lot to do with the things that were happening and Egypt had a lot to do with the things that were happening. Other factors entered into the history of the Northern Kingdom, but the prophets were men of God, and they traced the failure of Ephraim to a much earlier and subtler shift of the mind.

In other words, the things that had happened in the political sphere, and in the economic sphere and in the social sphere, were things that actually were the results of something that had happened in the hearts and minds of the people. And in fact, to trace

it simply, they had traced the subtler shift of things as a shift of trust in Yahweh to a shift of trust in Baal. And all of the other factors emerged from that.

And when we look at history, we can see this working in our own world. Today’s popular word is pluralism. We live in a pluralistic society, so we are told. We live in a pluralistic Western world. What is pluralism? Well, essentially pluralism is the idea that there is more than one or more than two kinds of ultimately reality. And generally, it is understood that they have equal validity, so that we live in a society in which some people regard this as the ultimate reality. Others regard this as the ultimate reality. And still others regard this third thing as the ultimate reality. And since we are in a pluralistic society, well then, of course, these are all equally valid.

But the prophet was not a pluralist. The prophet didn’t know anything about pluralism as we are taught it today. Now, he could have used that word. He could have said, the society in which we are living has become a pluralistic society. For some of you are worshipping Yahweh, and some of you are worshipping Baal, and some of your are worshipping, and he could have gone down a long list of the ultimate realities that individuals has as their ultimately reality. And he could have said, we’re in a pluralistic society, and Yahweh is one of these ultimate realities.

But no, the prophet was not a pluralist. In fact, pluralism in one sense was known to him and he would have been very much against it. In fact, he sees pluralism as the shattering of the very first commandment of the ten, for the very first commandment of the ten is “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Ten Commandments are not pluralistic. Christianity’s not pluralistic. In fact, he lays stress upon it.

And he lets you know that’s precisely what he’s thinking about. For if you’ll turn to chapter 12 and verse 9, he says, “But I have been the Lord your God since the land of Egypt.” I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of the appointed festival. And then in chapter 12 in verse 4 he says, “And yet, I have been the Lord your God since the

land of Egypt, and you were not to know any God but me because there is no savior besides me.” In other words, I’m no pluralistic deity. I’m a singular deity.

Now we’re living in the United States, and of course, what we are seeing today is kind of sleaze blitz of the United States. One doesn’t have to do much reading of the newspapers, look at your television screen, go to the theater – and I’m not telling you not to do any of these things, for there are some values to be found there, even if only to find out we’re in the midst of sleaze blitz [laughter] – and that’s what precisely what we are the objects of: a sleaze blitz. And one cannot help but see that.

Things that really matter are not the ideal and really important things in our society. A nation is no more than its morals and its character, and what we are seeing in the United States is such a sleaze blitz that we’ve become an immoral nation. You know, I like *B.C.* I confess that’s one of my things. I have to put that as number six on the list. [Laughter] But it’s hard, it keeps getting up my list of priorities. I have to open up the Today section of the *Dallas Morning News*. I think Johnny Hart’s a tremendous artist. He has a good insight into a lot of things.

And a couple of weeks ago, *B.C.* or somebody is down on the beach, and he’s hiding behind a sand dune, and he’s watching a clam. And this clam is rising up from the sand, and as he slowly rises up, you can see the clam’s legs. Now some of you young people won’t understand this, but some of us older people will. But, he suddenly turns and he shouts to his friends, “Clam’s got gams!” [Laughter] Now back when I was growing up, if a lady had pretty legs, we’d say, “She’s got pretty gams.” [Laughter] So he said, “Clam’s got gams!” And then about three or four days later he’s looking again, and this clam is having a little more difficult time arising out of the sand. And the mouth is slowly opening, and it looks like there’s a lot of spider’s web and stuff in his mouth, and finally he opens it up, and he shouts as he turns back and says, “Clam’s got Velcro!” [More laughter; Johnson laughs]

And so, you know when I read this chapter here, the thing that came to me as I was reading it here was, humans kiss calves! That’s what he says, verse 2, “Humans kiss calves.” Human beings kissing animals! That’s what they’re saying in Israel and Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom. Humans kiss calves. Can you think of that? Can you imagine it? But that’s the status.

It’s like the person who says, humans worship money! Humans worship family. Humans worship business, or whatever. So, that’s one thing, idolatry. It’s not surprising. Idolatry is basic. That’s why it’s number one on the commandments. It’s one of the number one problems of human life. In every age, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Singularity, not pluralism. Singularity. We don’t live in a pluralistic society. Oh in one sense, yes, there are all kinds of viewpoints, but there is only one viewpoint that’s right. In that sense, we don’t live in a pluralistic society. We live under a singular God who says, there is no Savior besides me.

Now of course if idolatry emerges, it’s not surprising that the other subject of judgment surfaces, too, because we need it, and because idolatry brings judgment. Some years ago I read in a little book which contained a number of illustrations for children. And this was an illustration of a man who went to Abercrombie and Fitch, and he lived on Long Island, and he bought a barometer. It was a very expensive barometer. I can just imagine a New York businessman going into Abercrombie and Fitch, lovely store – at least it was until it came to Texas; I don’t know what it is now – I go in and look at it occasionally, but it was known to people in the East that if you got something at Abercrombie and Fitch it was good.

So, he got a barometer, he took it home, and the needle was stuck on hurricane. [Laughter] And the next morning he got up, and it was still stuck on hurricane. He was very angry and he sat down and wrote a letter to Abercrombie and Fitch and said he had bought this supposedly nice barometer, paid a whole lot of money for it, the needle was stuck. He was very angry. And he got on his train as usual to take his little trip into New

York City to work in his business that day. And he came home that night and he found his barometer missing and his house also, because a hurricane had come [laughter] and the barometer was telling the truth all along. [Sustained laughter]

Well that’s the way people read the Bible. They read the Bible just like that. The word of God says idolatry brings judgment, and so we smile and say, The needle’s stuck. That doesn’t have to do with us. That has to do with Ephraim. That doesn’t have to do with the Christian church. No, not with us. Not with us in Believers Chapel. Maybe those Presbyterians or Baptists or Methodists – particularly the Baptists – and so on and so on. That’s the way, you know, we kind of reason. But really the Bible, when it speaks, speaks of a singular God whose words are absolutely true, and they will come to pass.

Well, the prophet has some very interesting things to say here in this chapter. It would be nice if we could spend a week on it. In fact, it would be nice if we could spend a year on Hosea. But he in the first eight verses talks about the fall of Ephraim, and he traces over their glorious history, because they’ve had a glorious past, down to the present sad state of the Northern Kingdom. He says, “When Ephraim spoke back in the past, there was trembling.” Because, you see, Ephraim was in touch with the Lord God and they were following the guidance of the Lord God, and when they did, fear fell upon the nations round about. Read the Book of Joshua, and you will see that that was true. Ephraim had been powerful and they had been honored in the earlier stages of her history.

But now, now they were idolaters. Now, they send more and more idols they make skillfully from their sliver. All of them the work of craftsmen. And then those who do the sacrificing, they are told, kiss the calves. Kiss the calves. That of course is a reference to the fact that Jeroboam had had the two calves made, and he had put in Dan and one in Bethel, and now the children of Israel were going up to worship the calves who were representative no doubt in the earlier days of Yahweh.

One can sense the idolatry, and the question is asked, naturally, what’s the cause of idolatry? Well let me suggest to you this. It’s possible and I think probable that what idolatry is is simply false answer to the yearning of the human heart. For remember, God, created us in his own image, in the image of God, created he us. And so deep down within there is a need to worship. It is implanted there by our creation.

But unfortunately as a result of the Fall, we suppress that. And the apostle speaks of it in Romans chapter 1. He says that that is what we are constantly engaged in doing until the Holy Spirit enlightens us and enables us to trust in the Lord God. So, that learning, that intuitive interest in ultimate concerns, that’s what leads ultimately to idolatry, for we seek to replace the true worship by something else because we suppress the worship of the true God since that requires repentance and turning from our wicked ways.

Henry Van Dyck said, “In every life there’s a ruling passion.” In a sense, that’s correct. You probably can find it in every life, in your life, in my life. In the lives of all of us. A ruling passion. Think of Roger Bannister. He had one ruling passion: break the four-minute mile. It’s a magnificent story to read what he did. For years he trained to break the barrier of the four-minute mile – psychological barrier, obviously, among other things. And finally he did it and stopped running. I must confess I admire him. But that was his ruling passion.

Jesus’ ruling passion? My mete is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work. I suggest to you that’s the best kind of ruling passion to have. My mete is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Now, the course of idolatry of course is a sad one, because when a person turns from the true worship, he gradually loses the heavenly vision, and ultimately it leads to the setting up of earthly gods according to our own standing, so the text says, in the place of the true god. Let’s just think for a moment about Ephraim. What did they do? Well, when the kingdoms were separated and Jeroboam thought, Now, I must keep the people

from going south to the place where they ought to worship in Jerusalem. So he conceived of the idea of having two places in the north, Dan and Bethel. He will make a couple of calves, set one in each place, and call the Northern Kingdom people to worship there. Humans kiss calves.

And I’m sure if you saw Jeroboam, he was a wise man. Very gifted man in many ways. If you had said, Jeroboam, why are you doing that? Yahweh is our true God. He would say, we believe in worshiping Yahweh. But this is a representation of Yahweh. It helps you to worship Yahweh. That’s the rationale behind idolatry. That’s why the churches have statues and all other kinds of things in their buildings. They are not consciously saying, we are idolaters; these are aids to worship.

Now of course, mind you, if you know the Scripture, you know they are not aids, because they are corruptible, and the one whom they are designed to represent are incorruptible. They are temporal; the one whom they are designed to represent are eternal, etc. They are finite; he is infinite. They are a poor representation, but that’s their rationale.

Then it’s not long before Ahab comes on the scene, after Jeroboam. Ahab doesn’t say, representation. He just says, we worship Baal. So he puts Baal in the place. So now representation now becomes substitution, and the baals, the lords, the masters, that’s what those words mean, they are set in the place of the Lord God. That’s the course of idolatry. It always goes that way.

And then finally, the worst curse of idolatry is, well, as he says, they make idols after their own understanding. But when they make idols after their own understanding, they make them like themselves. And in fact, in Psalm 115, the Psalmist says, as he gives seven or eight verses – we don’t have time to look at it; I wish we did, go home and look up Psalm 115 – he talks about those things that cannot hear, they cannot see, they cannot walk. People worship these, humans kiss calves. Think of it. Some people kiss the toes of statues.

But now he says, “They who make them are like them.” In other words, when we make an idol after our own understanding, we make it like ourselves. And so finally he says, they who make them have become like them. And so, idols. Imperfect. Polluted. Corrupting. Debased. That’s what the people become, ultimately.

Gordon Clark has an interesting statement in one of his books. He states, “Christian practice is the practice of Christian doctrine.” That’s very simple, isn’t it? Christian practice is the practice of Christian doctrine. In other words, what is the Christian life? Something ephemeral? Something spiritual and high-flown? There are people who go spiritual life conferences in order to get buoyed up psychologically, psychosomatically or whatever. Christian life, the Christian practice is simply the practice of Christian doctrine, what is taught in the Bible. That’s Christian life. What’s taught in the Bible. Dr. Clark is right: Christian practice is the practice of Christian doctrine, and idolatry is a curse. And idolatry, if it’s money, if it’s home, if it’s your business, if it’s your desire to succeed at the cost of your integrity, it ultimately affects you, you character. They that make them become like them.

Now, let’s see what God says about this. After all, he’s a nice old man up in the heavens, and he’s lovey-dovey, isn’t he? He’s really lovey-dovey. We don’t have to worry about his because he’s love. He’s a God of love, isn’t he? Everybody believes that, don’t you? He’s a God of love. Some of you look a little afraid, now. [Laughter] Well, I’m glad you do, because listen, “Therefore they will be like the morning cloud and like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor, and like smoke from a chimney.” Ah the transitoriness of those humans who kiss calves.

That’s not enough. He says, “Yet I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me.” No pluralism. Singularism. This is the same thing that Jesus means when he says, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.” There is no pluralism in spiritual truth.

Now he says, “I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought. As they had their pasture, they became satisfied, and being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore they forgot Me.” So, what will God be? A tolerant spectator while the children down below frolic in their sleaze? Listen to what he says, “So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will tear open their chests.”

Now, Martha and I went to see Indiana Jones – what is it? *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. There’s a nice little scene in that. I had been warned about this because I read a review, it’s a nice thing, you can take your children to. But there’s one scene in it that’s not so nice, and that’s when the high priest of the temple of doom, with one of his victims before him, just reaches into his heart and just pulls out his whole heart with the blood all dripping from it. That’s kind of a bad scene.

You know that’s exactly the picture here. I don’t know where they got that. Maybe one of those errant workers on the lot somehow or other said, somebody told me to read Hosea chapter 13. I read that, but it’s this strange thing. It’s got something in there we might use. Because it says here, “I will tear open their chests.” In the Hebrew text it says, “the enclosure of their heart,” a reference to the pericardium around the heart. And the picture is of God reaching down into the heart of Ephraim, taking the heart out, jerking the heart out with all of the blood and everything else, and then what the lion does and the animals do is drink the blood. That’s the picture.

Tolerant spectator while the people are frolicking down below? No. God of judgment. God of righteousness. No pluralistic God. Singular God. Sovereign God. God of judgment. Holy God. Consuming fire. Yes, loving God, too, but it’s amazing, isn’t it? That’s what God feels about idolatry. That’s what he does.

Now in verse 9 through verse 13 he just patiently gives the reason for the corruption and discloses his just judgment. He says in the 9th verse, “It is your destruction,

O Israel, that you are against Me.” That’s your problem. You’re against me. You’re against your help. Think of that. You’re against the one who can help you.

Now somewhat sarcastically, the prophet says, speaking for God, “Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges of whom you requested, ‘Give me a king and princes?’ I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath.” Ah, then God alludes back hundreds of years ago to the days of Samuel when Israel came and said to Samuel, Samuel, the nations about us all have kings. We don’t have a king. We want a king. And so Samuel went to the Lord God, he said, they’re complaining. They want a king. They want a king like the nations around them. And he was upset.

And the Lord said, “Samuel, don’t let it get to you. They haven’t rejected you. They’re rejected me.” You see, he was the king. He was the one who wanted to be their king. So, he did what he often does. He gave them what they wanted, but it was a gift from his left hand, not his right hand. And so, his decreative will determined they would have a king, although his preceptive will was that they should keep him as their king, though invisible.

So, the prophet says, “Where’s your king, now, that he may save you and all your cities?” And your judges of whom you requested, ‘Give me your kings and princes.’ I gave you a king in my anger, took him away in my wrath, because soon they’ll not have any kings because they’ll be in captivity.

That’s not of course all that happened. Later on, when Rehoboam came on the scene, they rejected the Lord God then, and the result was there was a long line of violent kings who perish at the hands of one another. Then the Northern Kingdom has no kings, the Southern Kingdom has no kings, and they are sent out into captivity. Of course, the final rejection came when Israel the Nation said to Pilate, with reference to the Lord Jesus, their king, “We have no king but Caesar.” In other words, the very thing that determined their existence before God they publicly deny. And so today, Israel is scattered to the

four corners of the earth until they should acknowledge their true king, the Lord Jehovah our triune God.

Now of course, there are things from which we may make application. We don’t have time to do all of things that should be done here. We have a tendency to turn away from the word of God, and what it teaches us is still in the Christian church. Let me give you a simple illustration.

In Believers Chapel you often hear people say, “I was talking with a friend of mine, and he asked me where I went to church, and I said, Believers Chapel, and he said to me, who’s your pastor?” What shall I say? Well, actually, the pastor of Believers Chapel is the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, we do believe in the gift of pastor-teacher, but not the office. There is no such office in the New Testament. Paul did not address his letters to pastors. He addressed them to the elders and the church as a whole. There is no office of pastor in the New Testament. There are evangelists. There are pastor-teachers. There are teachers. There are gifted men that are not even necessarily elders. The church, you see, has as its head the Lord Jesus Christ. The elders are under-shepherds. We don’t have any one man who’s the head of the church.

Well you might say, all the other churches do. So what. That’s what they should have said in Samuel’s day. Someone came – we don’t have a king. The Egyptians have a king, the Assyrians have a king. The rest of the Israelites should have said, so what! We have Yahweh has our king. Who want’s an earthly king? Who wants an earthly shepherd when we have the Lord Jesus as the shepherd of the flock?

Or in the personal sphere. So often in the personal sphere, we want to put something in the way of direct relationship to the Lord God. Now I’ve said two or three things recently, two or three times recently said something about psychiatry, psychology – amazingly, not too many people have come and objected. If you want to object, come and object. There are certain cases when it’s nice to have a psychiatrist. It’s nice to have a psychologist, but there are rare cases.

But what I want to say, and what I’ve tried to say is, in our faddism of the present day, what has resulted has been a practical denial of the sufficiency of the word of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I have a friend who is a Christian psychologist. In fact, he is professor at a Christian theological seminary. This is what he’s written in his book; I couldn’t agree with anything more. “It’s a serious error to suppose that Christ is helpful only in distinctly spiritual matters, but is irrelevant in resolving personal matters, like depression, and to then look to secular psychotherapy for answers.” That’s why we want a king again.

And so God gives them a king with a left hand. But what happens is we suffer. And we suffer if we do not realize that the solution to our problems lies primarily in the personal relationship to the Lord God through the word, as found out in the word, for Christian practice is the practice of Christian doctrine.

So, what about your kings? Go to them for help, the Lord says. They won’t be of any help. Your sin is stored up.

Now, if I may just for a few moments notice the 14th verse and the promise of redemption. A Puritan once said, “All things but lying, dying and denying himself are possible to God, and he can even save Ephraim.” Thomas Watson said, “God can make a straight stroke with a crooked stick. He can even save Ephraim.” William Gurnall, one of the other Puritans said, “One Almighty is worth more than all mighties.” And he can save Believers Chapel if we go to him and ask, on his terms, that he work mightily in our midst to the glory of his triune name.

Notice, “I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I shall redeem them from death. O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting?” This verse is designed to preserve believers from despair. It’s not a threat. It’s a promise. It’s a promise that ultimately will be true of Ephraim as part of the Nation Israel. But that generation, my dear friends, went into captivity, ultimately as a generation was lost forever.

When we talk about the future of Israel, we do not mean the future of all Israelites in the past. We mean the future of all Israelites as a nation of believers. The generations of believers pass off into a Christless eternity, just like the generations of Gentiles that do not believe in our Lord. But there is a wonderful promise in the word of God of a future for ethnic Israel. And the nation shall ultimately return to him by his marvelous grace.

And, compassion, will be hid from his sight as far as death and Sheol are concerned. He will not change his purposes, but he will accomplish them. He will do what Hosea has said in the 11th chapter when Hosea went through this great problem, How will I give Thee up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Adnah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart is turned over within me; all my compassions are kindled. And then God says, I will not execute my fierce anger. I will not destroy Ephraim again, for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

And he is able to do that by the sacrificial work by the Lord Christ who hundreds of years later offered himself as the atoning sacrifice, bearing the sin of sinners, freeing God’s mighty love and mercy to be extended to those who come in repentance and faith. SO, he will have compassion upon them. He will bring them back to himself. His purposes are accomplished. He is an unfrustratable God so far as his eternal purposes are concerned.

Well we like to say that there are five points in Calvinist soteriology: The inability of man of himself to turn to God; the election of the saints of God according to his sovereign good pleasure, not according to the foreseeing of their faith – if he had foreseen what they would have done apart from grace, they all would have turned from him; then also the particular redemption of his people, he dies for his sheep; his irresistible and effectual grace; and finally, the perseverance of the saints.

I suggest a sixth point of Calvinism. It’s the perseverance of our great God in all of his purposes. That’s what he’s talking about here. In spite of these threats and

warnings, carried out with reference to that generation, the Nation Israel has a glorious future, it is the result of the sovereign plan of God.

But today, the issue is your responsibility before the Lord God. Your responsibility is traceable to the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross. All of the judgment due sinners, poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ in its value and sufficiency, and the offer is a free pardon to those who come to God through him. Let us not fail to remember that he is not a tolerant spectator to human frolicking but he is intimately, closely concerned. He is no pluralistic deity. He is a singular deity concerned for the honor and glory of the name of the triune God, and if necessary, he will reach down and in judgment tear out the heart of those who fail to respond to his grace. Scriptures speak of eternal judgment. Oh may God keep everyone in this auditorium from the experience of that.

As an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, I plead with you as the prophet pled with Ephraim, turn, turn and believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Commit yourself to him. Trust in him. Put him and his interests at the top of your list of priorities and serve him. You shall know what true life really is. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these marvelous words from holy Scripture, so solemn, so searching, often so condemning. Lord, may we remember we are to have no other gods before Thee. There is no Savior beside Thee. Lord if there is someone in this auditorium who has not come to Christ, may at this very moment in their heart they be saying to Thee, O Lord, by Thy grace I lean upon Jesus Christ and the blood that was shed, now and forever.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

