



Hosea 12-14

Tape #7353
Hosea 12-14
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn to Hosea, chapter twelve. Ephraim was the major tribe of the northern kingdom. Though the northern kingdom is often referred to as Israel, and it is also referred to as Ephraim, the major and leading tribe of the northern kingdom.

Now, he begins the twelfth chapter by saying that...

Ephraim feeds on the wind, [Or on emptiness. The things that they are seeking for their security, are empty. It's like trying to grab hold of the wind as it's passing. You grab hold of it, open your hand, and what have you got? So, you know, grab it and eat it, what have you got? You're trying to, you're trying to nourish yourself, you're trying to strengthen yourself on emptiness. That which cannot strengthen you or help you.] *and he follows after the east wind*: [The east wind was that dry blasting wind, such as our east wind here. The Santa Ana's, they just dry things out, and leave things just dry and sort of miserable, after the east wind has blown. So he is taking the course that is going to lead to desolation. He's taking the course that is going to just bring them just chaos! So,] *he daily increases the lies and desolation*; [That is the path that he has taken.] *and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and then they carry oil to Egypt (12:1)*.

They were playing both sides of the fence. They were looking to both Assyria for help against the Egyptians, and they were looking to the Egyptians for help, against the Assyrians. So they were making the covenant with the Assyrians at the same time, they were going down and taking their olive oil down to Egypt, as sort of rewards, bribes, or whatever, to elicit the help of the Egyptians. So this playing both sides.

The Lord also has a controversy with Judah, [Now this of course was the southern kingdom.] *and he will punish Jacob according to his ways*; [An insight into the justice of God. He punishes according to their ways. There are many times when the justice of God is challenged. Because God has not spelled out clearly, the consequences of certain groups, or individuals, or people. For instance, those people who have never had the opportunity of hearing about Jesus Christ, how will God judge them? How could God righteously condemn them to eternal punishment, when they've never had the opportunity to hear? Well, first of all we are making some assumptions that the bib, the bible doesn't really spell out clearly. The Bible really doesn't spell out what God is going to do with those people who have never had the opportunity to hear of Jesus Christ. The bible doesn't say that they will be punished or tormented forever. It doesn't say that. That is, that's an assumption that people make. What will God do with them? I don't know. God doesn't say. But I do know, that when He does, it'll be perfectly just. We'll say, "Oh, isn't that right on!", for God is just. I know that God is fair. Now, here it declares that God will punish according to a person's ways. Jesus makes mention of this in Luke, chapter twelve. "The servant who knew the will of God, and yet rebelled and did not according to the will of God. Though he knew it, he will be beaten with many stripes. Yet he who did things that were worthy of many stripes, because he did not know the will, will be beaten with few. Unto whom much is given, much is required." God will judge according to the amount of knowledge, and the amount of opportunities that a person has had. He'll be righteous, He'll be fair in His judgement. I can't say that for man. There's a lot of unjust things going on with man. But with God, His judgement will be just, it will be fair. So, "The Lord will punish him",] *according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him (12:2)*.

The justice of God. Now, speaking of Jacob...

He took his brother by the heel in the womb, [You remember when their mother was expecting, Rebecca was expecting. She was having a miserable pregnancy. She prayed to the Lord to find out why she was having such a difficult pregnancy. The Lord said, "There are two nations in your womb. They are diverse from each other". So, they were struggling, there in the womb, these two boys who would head two nations, diverse. One was a man of the fields, the other was a mama's darling. It was just the contrast between them, and the conflict that developed between them.] *by his strength he had power with God (12:3)*.

Jacob is a man that God had chosen, and by his strength, he wrestled with God, had power with God.

Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: [A difficult statement, until you read the next. How could a man wrestle with an angel of God, and prevail against the angel of God? We know the story from Genesis. Genesis doesn't give us the answer. Jacob set things up for his meeting with Esau. Then he set his family on one side of the river Jabbok. He crossed over to the other side to have a good night's sleep. But there came a man and wrestled with him all night long. As it began to be morning, and Jacob hadn't surrendered, hadn't given up, the angel that was wrestling with him touched him in his thigh. The sinew, the muscle shriveled, and he became a permanent cripple. Now his last hope of escape from Esau is gone. He had done his best to set up things, that he might have an amicable meeting with his brother, but if all else fails, run. If Esau is still angry and bent on killing him, run! But now he can't run. Thus as the day was breaking, the angel said, "Let me go because the day is breaking", and Jacob, according to Hosea here,] *was weeping, and he was praying* [And he was saying, "I will not let you go until you bless me!", weeping, broken. It is interesting that in our brokers, and God often uses the breaking processes to bring out in our lives, and through our lives, His ultimate plan and purpose.

There is that stubborn resistance that we often have to God. We find ourselves wrestling with God, and as we wrestle with God, God will use severe means many times, to bring us to the end of our self. Now, because Jacob was such a resourceful person, it took a lot to bring him to the end of himself. It finally took the crippling. But that was the last straw. That broke Jacob. Now he is weeping, now he is pleading. It is through this brokers, that he prevailed. It was through prayer that he prevailed. It is when we recognize our weakness, our helplessness, and we just feel that desperation of, "I don't have any place to turn! Oh God, help me!", that it is in that time that we prevail with God, and we have power with God through the prayer, and through brokers. As the psalmist said in thirty four that, "A broken spirit, God will not turn away. And He will bring salvation to those of a contrite heart". So, the Lord had brought him to this place, and the Lord is seeking to bring us to that place. If we are extremely resourceful, self-reliant and all, God has to use many times, more severe means. But it is so important that I come to that place of submitting, and surrendering myself and my will to God. So, interestingly enough in the blessing of Jacob, it came about through the change of name. He said, "What is your name", and Jacob said, "Yakov or heel-catcher", He said, "You'll no longer be 'heel-catcher', you will be Israel, which means governed by God. You've been governed by your own skillful, manipulative power, you've been ruling over others, and taking advantage of others through your conniving. But from now on, you're gonna be governed by God". And it was a change of character in Jacob that took place there. The change of character, represented in the change of name. So he says in verse four, "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept",] *and made supplication unto him: and then he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us (12:4);*

Now as Jacob came back into the land, the Lord had told him, when he was in Babylon, in Heron there, He said, "Return to Bethel and I will deal well with you". It was at Bethel that Jacob came into a real consciousness and awareness of God. It was there that he had used a rock for a pillow, and had that night where the dreams, the angels ascending, and descending and all. In the morning he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not". He called the name of the place, Bethel, "house of God".

You know it's interesting how the Lord so often calls us back to the place where we first encountered Him. Where we first became conscious of God, became aware of God. God is calling him back to Bethel. Back to that first place where you really met God and became conscious of God. So as he is now had a peaceful meeting with Esau, continues to journey in the land, as they get near Bethel, as he is going now to Bethel to worship God, Jacob said to his family, "Alright now put away all of the little idols that you have".

You remember that Rachel, his wife, ripped off some of her dad's idols. That's one of the things that Laban was angry about. He said, "You've stolen my gods!", and it was really upset with him. Tragic to have gods that someone can steal. But, people do! They put alarms on their little gods, and all kinds of things to protect them, but yet their gods get stolen. But he said, "You've stolen my gods!".

You remember, they searched. He said, "Search through and see if you can find them", and Rachel was, had them under her stuff, and she had set down and spread her skirt down over them. When they came in, she said, "Excuse me for not standing up, I'm menstruating and all". So they passed by, and she sort of

picked up some of her husband's kind of stuff. You know, conniving and all, it sort of goes in the family. You know, you deceive, and you get deceived, and such was the case with Jacob. He was a deceiver, but his uncle deceived him. You sort of, you know, what goes around, comes around!

So, he returned to Bethel, told them, "Put away your idols, we're going to meet God". There God renewed the covenant with Jacob, telling him that, "He would give to Jacob's descendants the land", and all. God renewed there the covenant with Jacob. So Hosea mentions that here. "He found him in Bethel, and there he spoke with us;" God spoke concerning the future of Jacob's descendants, and the blessings and the inheritance that God would give to them.

But, Hosea in talking to the people, you see, they have been guilty of taking up idols again. They're guilty of worshiping these other gods. The idea is, "Get rid of the idols, and come back to God, and God will speak with you. God will still deal well with you, but you've got to return to God. You've got to get rid of all of these idols. All of these false gods, and come back to the, to God, and God will speak to us, and God will deal with us".

Even [There the Lord spoke with them. Even,] Jehovah God of hosts; the Jehovah is his memorial. [Or is His name.] Therefore turn now to thy God: [You see, he is, he is saying, "Jacob went back to Bethel now you, turn to your God".] keep mercy and judgement, and wait on thy God continually (12:5-6).

Three things, well, four actually. Turn to God, but then turn to God by showing mercy and fairness. Mercy and judgement, and then just wait on God continually. How many times the scripture exhorts us to waiting upon the Lord. But you know I don't know of anything that's more difficult than just, "Wait on the Lord". You know, we're so wanting to get in, and, and you know, get things going, and to just wait on God seems to be one of the most difficult things in the world! Yet, over, and over, and over again, we're exhorted, "Just wait on the Lord". Speaking of Ephraim now...

He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loves to oppress (12:7).

The people had, as a nation, become corrupt. You couldn't trust them. They were crooked in their businesses. They had false balances, the balances of deceit were in their hands. And they were boasting and bragging in their prosperity.

Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all of my labours they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin (12:8).

Cleverly covering their tracks. Thinking that they were getting by with their crooked and perverse, crookedness and perversity. Bragging on their prosperity. But it had come through ill gotten gain. So they say no one knows, no one sees, but God said...

And I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make you to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. I have also spoken by the prophets, I've multiplied visions, I've used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets (12:9-10).

God said, "I've spoken to you in every way that I, I can!" This business of using similitudes. In the new testament, you remember that Jesus was teaching the people, and they got to where they weren't listening. So He started using parables. He would tell a story and they would get all wrapped up in the story. Then He'd give them the punch line. And uh, it was the punch line that usually just, you know, it got their hearts! But, the prophets used similitudes so, Jeremiah bought this gorgeous new robe, wore it through the streets. Everybody was saying, "Did you see that gorgeous robe that Jeremiah has? Ooh, man that must have cost him a pretty penny!", or drachma, or whatever.

Then the Lord says, "Now bury it by a rock in the river Euphrates". He took it out and buried it, the colors all ran, the water bugs ate holes in it, and, and it just was an ugly, ugly thing. The Lord said, "Now go out and dig it up, from under that rock and put it on. Wear it through the streets of Jerusalem again". They say, "Yuck! What in the world is he wearing?" Then he preached, and he said, "Judah was once like a lovely garment, beautiful! Wonderful to behold! But now, it's become rotten, ugly".

So that's the similitude. That's, that's making your point by illustrating it in an interesting way. He would do that, I, Ezekiel was a great one for the use of similitudes. Lying on his one side for many days, and then turning over and lying on the other side. Eating just bread and water, and all. It was a similitude by which he was prophesying the years of captivity. So, here the Lord mentions, "I've spoken to you by

similitudes”.

You know God speaks to man all the time by similitudes. As the sun is setting, you see the beautiful sunset, God may be speaking to your heart and saying, “You know, one day you’re gonna come to the sunset of your life, so prepare”. You sit down to the table to eat, and God says, “You need spiritual nourishment also”. I mean, He can speak to us in so many different ways, and, and, it’s, it’s interesting, and it’s unique, how God will speak to us through circumstances, and through events that happen in similitudes. Suddenly we get, ooh, the picture, “Yes, I see. Oh!” So God is saying that, and this was always to, to attract attention, when people weren’t listening, God would use a similitude to catch their attention.

Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; [But not unto God. It was a place of pagan worship.] yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields. [They uh, when you plow a field, and those big clods are there just all over the field, so altars, all over the country to their other gods.] And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel [The other name that God gave to him.] served for a wife, [The seven years that he served for Rachel, then received Leah in a crooked deal, and then Leah, and then the other seven years for Rachel. So, “He served for a wife”,] and for a wife he kept Laban’s sheep. And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, [Of course a reference to Moses.] and by a prophet was he preserved. But Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: and therefore he shall leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him (12:11-14).

So God brought them out of Egypt, God was with Jacob, but now they have turned from the Lord, and they are going to suffer the consequences of their refusing to come back to God.

Chapter 13

When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; [The scripture said, “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted”. When Ephraim spoke out of just uncertainty, when the beginning of the nation, there was that lack of self-confidence, but a trust in the Lord. At that time, God exalted them, God exalted the nation.] but when he offended in Baal, he died. [When they turned from God, and began the worship of Baal, then is when they brought destruction to the land.] And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of silver, idols according to their own understanding, of all of the work of the craftsmen: and they say to them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss these calves (13:1-2).

So they made gods of their own understanding. Interesting, because that is very common with man. To make gods of his own understanding. In other words, basic you, basically you say, “If I were God, this is what I would do. This is where I would live, this is how I would react and respond to man, if I were God I would do it this way...”, and many times we think that, though we don’t verbalize it, or express it. But we often times say, “You know, why would God do this?”, or “Why would God do that?”, and basically, when you ask the question in that way, you are saying, “If I were God, I wouldn’t do it like that! You know, I would do it another way, if I were God”. So what people did is they started making gods of their own understanding. It was really a projection of themselves to deity. “If I were God, this is what I would do! If I were God”, the Greeks, “I would live on mount Olympus, and I would come down and use my divine powers to seduce those lovely girls”. So, the gods of their own understanding. They began to worship these other gods. Now there’s only one true and living God, who created the heaven and the earth, and He has revealed Himself here in the bible. But men have created many gods, which are projections of themselves, which they then worship. Gods of their own understanding.

Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, [You ought to recognize that picturesque speech, here in California, especially as we come into the month of June and all. You hear the weather report, “Low clouds early morning, hazy sunny, you know hazy sun in the afternoon”. But the morning cloud, that California eddy, or Catalina eddy that comes in, and the morning clouds that dissipate around ten or eleven o’clock. Then you have a lovely sunny day. But the clouds just sort of, those morning clouds dissipate, they’re gone, they disappear. So, “Ephraim is gonna be like a morning cloud”.] and as the early dew in the morning that’s on the grass, but it passes away, [as soon as the sun comes up] as the chaff [on the threshing floor] that when the whirlwind comes by [all of that chaff] is [just picked up and] blown away, as the smoke out of the chimney (13:3).

That just sort of disappears into the sky, just sort of dissolves. So all of these are figures of that which is going to just disappear off the scene. Ephraim is just going to disappear off the scene. Like the morning cloud, like the smoke out of a chimney, like the chaff in a threshing floor when the whirlwind comes by.

Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, ["Brought you out created the nation."] and thou shalt know no gods but me: for there is no saviour beside me (13:4).

Now God established the law with them. He said, "If you will keep this law, then I will be your God, and you'll be my people, and I will bless you, I'll prosper you, and I'll do all these things. But when you forsake me, then I will forsake you, and these consequences will take place, when I have forsaken you". Now they have forsaken God, they've come to that point in their history, where they're no longer listening to God. The warnings that God gave them are disregarded, and they're about to disappear. They're about to fade from the scene. Like dew on the grass, they're, they're about to just disappear. There is no Savior beside Him. There is no God beside Him, but Him.

I did know you in the wilderness, ["I brought you out of Egypt. I knew you in the wilderness."] in the land of great drought. ["I brought you through forty years of that dry, arid wilderness, desert."] According to their pasture, so they were filled; ["I brought you into the land, a beautiful verdant land, the land with plenty of water, beautiful green valleys, and tree covered hillsides, plenty of pasture land." So, they were filled.] they were filled, and their heart was exalted; and therefore have they forgotten me (13:5-6).

In their great need and consciousness of their need, they sought the Lord. When things were really tough. When things were lean, they really looked to God. In the barren wilderness, where they, it was survival. They looked to God for the daily manna. For the water out of the rock. Now they've come into prosperity, they've come into a fertile land, and in their prosperity, they forget God. They have created now, other gods, other interests, other things that have captured their hearts, and their minds, and their attention. What a pattern.

We see it followed all the time. People in great need turn to God, seek the Lord. God begins to bless them, and as they are blessed, they begin to turn away from God, they begin to get busy with other things. And, and they begin to forsake the Lord, and thus was the pattern here. In their prosperity, their heart was exalted. They forgot God.

Therefore I will be to them like a lion: or like a leopard by the way I will just watch them: [Waiting for the opportunity to just pounce.] I will meet them as a bear that has been robbed of her cubs, and I will rend the caul of their heart, [Like a bear just rip out their hearts.] and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. O Israel, ["You've committed suicide, you've destroyed yourself." Through the practices, through their choices, they destroyed themselves. I look at the United States today, and I see how we are destroying ourselves. How we have elected our own destruction. Voted for our own destruction, destroying ourselves. God said,] I will be thy king: where is any other that may save you in all of the city? thy judges whom you have said, Give me a king and princes? I gave you a king in my anger, but I took him away in my wrath (13:7-11).

"You rejected me from ruling over you." Remember when the people came to Samuel and said, "We want a king like the other nations!", and Samuel came to the Lord, heartbroken, and God said to Samuel, "Samuel, don't feel so bad, they haven't rejected you, they have rejected me from ruling over them". That's what really had happened. They had rejected God's reign over their lives. "We will not have God to rule over us. We want a king." So God said, "I gave them a king in my anger, but then took him away in my wrath".

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; and his sin is hid (13:12).

The idea is in the binding up, of the, of the sin and the evil of Ephraim, the iniquity, it's that idea of, it's being reserved, it's waiting now for the fulness, and then the judgement and the wrath to be poured out. The same idea is given in Revelation, where it talks about, "The cup of the indignation of God's wrath being filled, and then the cup of the indignation of His wrath overflowing". It's just being reserved, it's building up until it hits that point where then the judgement of God is going to fall.

The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: for he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem

them from death: [Now here, He talks about, “They’ve destroyed themselves, you’ve committed suicide so to speak, national suicide. In me is your help, but you won’t turn to me.” But then the Lord never leaves you in that dark, dismal, dungeon. He now speaks of the future. Though they’re gonna be scattered, and as well as dead, yet God will bring them from the grave, the power of the grave and redeem them from death. He will bring the nation back again. We have seen the reviving of the nation of Israel!] *O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction:* [Sort of like Paul’s cry in Corinthians, you remember? “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory!” “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction:”] *repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. Though he be fruitful among his bretheren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all the pleasant vessels. Samaria will become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up (13:12-16).*

“Horrible days are coming, because you have taken the path that leads to destruction. Your own self-willed ways. You have forsaken God. You have made your own gods, of your own understanding. You’ve worshiped them. This will be the consequence. This will be the result. The moral breakdown, the spiritual breakdown, will lead to social chaos and upheaval, weakness, until you will be destroyed.”

Now, God looks out to the future. That’s, that’s the immediate, that’s what’s gonna happen, but God who is so merciful, God who is so loving and so forgiving, so plenteous in mercy towards those that will call upon Him, God calls to Israel to return.

Chapter 14

O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thy iniquity. [“It’s your sin that brought you down, but return unto Jehovah thy God.”] *Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously: and so we will render the calves of our lips (14:1-2).*

“O God forgive us! O God receive us, and we will give to you, the calves of our lips.” Or the sacrifice, the calves were used for sacrifice. “We will give to you the sacrifice of our lips.” In the book of Hebrews, it says that, “we are to offer to God, the sacrifice of praise, even the fruit of our lips”. As we sing our praises, and as we worship the God, our God with songs of praises and thanksgiving, that is really like offering the sacrifice unto God, in that it is pleasant to the Lord. With the offerings of the Old Testament, the incense, it was that sweet savour unto God. It was, it was pleasant. Thus the prayers of God’s people, rises as incense, pleasant unto the Lord. Our praises, like a sweet perfume unto God. Thus the sacrifice of praise, unto the Lord.

Asshur will not save us; [The recognition now that, “Our salvation cannot come from Assyria”. In fact, Assyria is the one that’s going to destroy them. Assyria is the one that will dash their children, and rip up the pregnant women. “Asshur will not save us.”] *we will not ride upon horses:* [They, they would trade the Egyptians for the horses. That’s where the finest horses were bred, and so, “These horses from Egypt will not save us”,] *neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, You are our gods:* [These little idols, “We won’t say anymore, You are our God”,] *for in thee the fatherless finds mercy (14:3).*

So this, this prophecy of the returning to God. And God in, in response to their returning to Him said...

I will heal their backslidings, and I will love them freely: [I love that! God loves us freely. For if God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how much more than shall He not freely give us all things! God’s love for us. So great, that He didn’t spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us, but how much more! If God has given us that much, my, how much more will God give to us those little things that we need day by day, freely give us all things? “I will love them freely.” Oh God just love me freely!] *for my anger is turned away from him (14:4).*

When Asa came back from victory over the Nubians, and the Ethiopians that had invaded the land at the beginning of his reign, the prophet came out to Asa, and he said, “The Lord is with you, while you’ll be with, while you will be with Him, and if you seek Him, He will be found of you. But if you forsake Him, He will forsake you”. This is just the principle, not for Asa, but for all. The Lord is with you, if you’ll just be with Him. If you seek the Lord, you’ll find Him. But if you forsake the Lord, then you’re on your own. He’ll

forsake you.

Now, Ephraim forsook the Lord, and was forsaken by the Lord and was destroyed. But they are going to return to the Lord. They're going to seek the Lord, and God who is so gracious, so forgiving, will forgive them, and love them freely. And the Lord said...

I will be as the dew unto Israel: [That is, that freshness of the morning. That renewing, the rejuvenating of the dryness of the land.] and he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as the forest in Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; and they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: and the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon (14:5-7).

Oh, what God is going to do! What God desires to do! All He wants is just the excuse to do it! Your turning to Him, your surrendering yourself, and returning to God, and just allowing God to again, rule and reign in your heart. Then the blessings of God will just begin to be poured out upon you!

Ephraim will say, What have I to do any more with idols? [“I’ve learned my lesson!”] I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. [“I’ve heard God’s voice, I’ve turned to God, I’ve observed Him, and now I’ve become like a fir tree. Just no longer the deciduous tree, that dies out and is so barren. But now, bearing fruit unto the Lord.” God’s desire, that you bring forth much fruit.] Who is wise, he shall understand these things? prudent, he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, [Now we sort of sought to establish that early in the lesson this evening. God is just, God is fair. The ways of the Lord are right. Man challenges often, the justice and the fairness of God, but the ways of the Lord are right.] and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein (14:8-9).

What important eternal principles, have been set for us by the prophet Hosea. As he spoke to the nation of Ephraim, he speaks to every nation, who has forsaken the Lord, and has adopted other gods. What is true of a nation, is true of an individual. If you forsake the Lord, and worship other gods, you'll be brought to desolation. You're trusting in emptiness. But if you will return to the Lord, you can experience the blessings of God, the fruitfulness, the forgiveness, the grace. If you're wise, you'll understand this. If you're prudent, you'll know these things. The ways of the Lord are right!

Father, we thank You that You have taught us Your ways. Help us to walk in Your way, in Your truth, and in Your light. Lord, as we have sung, “I will serve no foreign god, or any other idols”, God help us, to truly put away other idols, interests, things that might capture, and control our minds in our lives, that we might serve You, the true, and the living God. That we might worship You Lord. Let our praises rise as incense and sweet perfume. Lord, may we live a life that is pleasing, acceptable in Your sight O Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen.