

CHAPTER 11

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The great goodness of God towards his people Israel, and the great things he had done for them (v. 1, 3, 4).
- II.** Their ungrateful conduct towards him, notwithstanding his favours towards them (v. 2-4, 7, 12).
- III.** Threatenings of wrath against them for their ingratitude and treachery (v. 5, 6).
- IV.** Mercy remembered in the midst of wrath (v. 8, 9).
- V.** Promises of what God would yet do for them (v. 10, 11).
- VI.** An honourable character given of Judah (v. 12).

HOSEA 11:1-7

GOD'S GOODNESS TO ISRAEL

Here we find,

I. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more, which they are here, I will not say upbraided with (for God gives, and upbraids not), but put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin and an encouragement to repentance.

1. He had a kindness for them when they were young (v. 1): *When Israel was a child then I loved him; when they first began to multiply into a nation in Egypt God then set his love upon them, and chose them because he loved them, because he would love them,* ~~NOTE~~ Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and froward as children, when they were outcasts, and children exposed, then God *loved them; he pitied them, and testified his goodwill to them; he bore them as the nurse does the sucking child, nourished them, and suffered their manners.* Note, Those that have grown up, nay, those that have grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

2. He delivered them out of the house of bondage: *I called my son out of Egypt*, because a son, because a beloved son. When God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh he called them *his son*, his *first-born*. Note, Those whom God loves he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when, upon the death of Herod, he and his parents were *called out of Egypt* (⁴⁰²⁵Matthew 2:15), so that the words have a double aspect, speaking historically of the calling of Israel out of Egypt and prophetically of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his Son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his, through him, out of spiritual slavery.

3. He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but, such is the condescension of divine grace, as a mother or nurse (v. 3): *I taught Ephraim also to go*, as a child in leading-strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, showed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, *taking them by the arms*. *He taught them to go* in the way of his commandments, by the institutions of the ceremonial law, which were as tutors and governors to that people under age. He took them by the arms, to guide them, that they might not stray, and to hold them up, that they might not stumble and fall. God's spiritual Israel are thus supported. *Thou has holden me by my right hand*, (⁴⁹²³Psalms 73:23).

4. When any thing was amiss with them, or they were ever so little out of order, he was their physician: *"I healed them;* I not only took a tender care of them (a friend may do that), but wrought an effectual cure: it is a God only that can do that. *I am the Lord that healeth thee* (⁴⁹²⁵Exodus 15:26), that redresseth all thy grievances."

5. He brought them into his service by mild and gentle methods (v. 4): *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love*. Note, It is God's work to draw poor souls to himself; and none can come to him except he draw them, (⁴¹⁶⁴John 6:44). He draws,

(1.) *With the cords of a man*, with such cords as men draw with that have a principle of humanity, or such cords as men are drawn with; he dealt with

them *as men*, in an equitable rational way, in an easy gentle way, *with the cords of Adam*. He dealt with them as with Adam in innocency, bringing them at once into a paradise, and into covenant with himself.

(2.) *With bands of love, or cartropes of love*. This word signifies stronger cords than the former. He did not drive them by force into his service, whether they would or no, nor rule them with rigour, nor detain them by violence, but his attractives were all loving and endearing, all sweet and gentle, that he might overcome them with kindness. Moses, whom he made their guide, was the meekest man in the world. *Kindnesses* among men we commonly call *obligations, or bonds, bonds of love*. Thus God *draws with the savour of his good ointments* (²¹¹⁴Song of Solomon 1:4), *draws with lovingkindness,* ²⁴⁰³Jeremiah 31:3. Thus God deals with us, and we must deal in like manner with those that are under our instruction and government, deal rationally and mildly with them.

6. He eased them of the burdens they had been long groaning under: *I was to them as those that take off the yoke on their jaws*, alluding to the care of the good husbandman, who is merciful to his beast, and will not tire him with hard and constant labour. Probably, in those times, the yoke on the neck of the oxen was fastened with some bridle, or headstall, over the jaws, which *muzzled the mouth of the ox*. Israel in Egypt were thus restrained from the enjoyments of their comforts and constrained to hard labour; but God eased them, *removed their shoulder from the burden,* ⁴⁸¹⁶Psalms 81:6. Note, Liberty is a great mercy, especially out of bondage.

7. He supplied them with food convenient. In Egypt they fared hard, but, when God brought them out, he *laid meat unto them*, as the husbandman, when he has unyoked his cattle, foddens them. God rained manna about their camp, bread from heaven, angels' food; other creatures *seek their meat*, but God laid meat to his own people, as we do to our children, was himself their caterer and carver, anticipated *them with the blessings of goodness*.

II. Here is Israel very ungrateful to God.

1. They were deaf and disobedient to his voice. He spoke to them by his messengers, Moses and his other prophets, called them from their sins, called them to himself, to their work and duty; but *as they called them so they went from them*; they rebelled in those particular instances wherein they were admonished; the more pressing and importunate the prophets

were with them, to persuade them to that which was good, the more refractory they were, and the more resolute in their evil ways, disobeying for disobedience-sake. This foolishness is bound in the hearts of children, who, as soon as they are taught to go, will go from those that call them.

2. They were fond of idols, and worshipped them: They *sacrificed to Baalim*, first one Baal and then another, and *burnt incense to graven images*, though they were called to by the prophets of the Lord again and again not to do this abominable thing which he hated. Idolatry was the sin which from the beginning, and all along, had most easily beset them.

3. They were regardless of God, and of his favours to them: *They knew not that I healed them*. They looked only at Moses and Aaron, the instruments of their relief, and, when any thing was amiss, quarrelled with them, but looked not through them to God who employed them. Or, When God corrected them, and kept them under a severe discipline, they understood not that it was for their good, and that God thereby *healed them*, and it was necessary for the perfecting of their cure, else they would have been better reconciled to the methods God took. Note, Ignorance is at the bottom of ingratitude, ^{
}Hosea 2:8.

4. They were strongly inclined to apostasy. This is the blackest article in the charge (v. 7): *My people are bent to backsliding from me*. Every word here is aggravating.

(1.) They *backslide*. There is no hold of them, no steadfastness in them; they seem to come forward, towards God, but they quickly slide back again, and are as a deceitful bow.

(2.) They backslide *from me*, from God, the chief good, the fountain of life and living waters, from their God who never turned from them, nor war as a wilderness to them.

(3.) They are *bent to backslide*; they are ready to sin; there is in their natures a propensity to that which is evil; at the best they hang in suspense between God and the world, so that a little thing serves to draw them the wrong way; they are forward to close with every temptation. It also intimates that they are resolute in sin; their hearts are *fully set in them to do evil* the bias is strong that way; and they persist in their backslidings, whatever is said or done to stop them; and yet,

(4.) “They are, in profession, *my people*. They are *called by my name*, and profess relation to me; they are mine, whom I have done much for and expect much from, whom I have *nourished* and *brought up, as children*, and yet they backslide *from me*.” Note, In our repentance we ought to lament not only our backslidings, but our *bent to backslide*, not only our actual transgressions, but our original corruption, the sin that dwells in us, the carnal mind.

5. They were strangely averse to repentance and reformation. Here are two expressions of their obstinacy: —

(1.) *They refused to return*, v. 5. So much were they bent to backslide that, though they could not but find, upon trial, the folly of their backslidings, and that when they forsook God they changed for the worse, yet they went on frowardly. *I have loved strangers, and after them I will go*. They were commanded to return, were courted and entreated to return, were promised that if they would they should be kindly received, but they refused.

(2.) Though *they called them to the Most High*. God's prophets and ministers called them to return to the God from whom they had revolted, to the most high God, from whom they had sunk into this wretched degeneracy; they called them from the worship of the idols, which were so much below them, and the worship of which was therefore their disparagement, to the true God, who was so much above them, and the worship of whom was therefore their preferment; they called them from this earth to high and heavenly things; but they called in vain. *None at all would exalt him*. Though he is the most high God they would not acknowledge him to be so, would do nothing to honour him nor give him the glory due to his name. Or, They would not *exalt themselves*, would not rise out of that state of apostasy and misery into which they had precipitated themselves; but there they contentedly lay still, would not lift up their heads nor lift up their souls. Note, God's faithful ministers have taken a great deal of pains, to no purpose, with backsliding children, have called them to the Most High; but none would stir, *none at all would exalt him*.

III. Here is God very angry, and justly so, with Israel; see what are the tokens of God's displeasure with which they are here threatened.

1. God, who brought them out of Egypt, to take them for a people to himself, since they would not be faithful to him, shall bring them into a

worse condition than he at first found them in (v. 5): “*He shall not return into the land of Egypt*, though that was a house of bondage grievous enough; but he shall go into a harder service, for *the Assyrian shall be his king*, who will use him worse than ever Pharaoh did.” They shall not return into Egypt, which lies near, where they may hear often from their own country, and whence they may hope shortly to return to it again; but they shall be carried into Assyria, which lies much more remote, and where they shall be cut off from all correspondence with their own land and from all hopes of returning to it, and justly, because *they refused to return*. Note, Those that will not return to the duties they have left cannot expect to return to the comforts they have lost.

2. God, who gave them Canaan, that good land, and a very safe and comfortable settlement in it, shall bring his judgments upon them there, which shall make their habitation unsafe and uncomfortable (v. 6): *The sword* shall come upon them, the sword of war, the sword of a foreign enemy, prevailing against them and triumphing over them.

(1.) This judgment shall spread far. The sword shall fasten upon their *cities*, those nests of people and store-houses of wealth; it shall likewise reach to their *branches*, the country villages (so some), the citizens themselves (so others), or the *bars* (so the word signifies) and gates of their city, or all the branches of their revenue and wealth, or their children, the branches of their families.

(2.) It shall last long: It shall *abide on their cities*. David thought *three months* flying before his enemies was the only judgment of the three that was to be excepted against; but this *sword* shall abide much longer than three months on the cities of Israel. They continued their rebellions against God, and therefore God continued his judgments on them.

(3.) It shall *make a full end*: It shall *consume their branches, and devour them*, and lay all waste, and this *because of their own counsels*, that is, because they would have their own projects, which God therefore, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up to. Note, The confusion of sinners is owing to their contrivance. God's counsels would have saved them, but their own counsels ruined them.

HOSEA 11:8-12

THE DIVINE FORBEARANCE

In these verses we have,

I. God's wonderful backwardness to destroy Israel (v. 8, 9): *How shall I give thee up?* Here observe,

1. God's gracious debate within himself concerning Israel's case, a debate between justice and mercy, in which victory plainly inclines to mercy's side. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! at the glory of God's goodness. Not that there are any such struggles in God as there are in us, or that he is ever fluctuating or unresolved; no, he is in one mind, and knows it; but they are expressions after the manner of men, designed to show what severity the sin of Israel had deserved, and yet how divine grace would be glorified in sparing them notwithstanding. The connexion of this with what goes before is very surprising; it was said of Israel (v. 7) that they were *bent to backslide from God*, that though they were called to him they *would not exalt him*, upon which, one would think, it should have followed, "Now I am determined to destroy them, and never show them mercy any more." No, such is the sovereignty of mercy, such the freeness, the fulness, of divine grace, that it follows immediately, *How shall I give thee up?* See here,

(1.) The proposals that justice makes concerning Israel, the suggestion of which is here implied. Let Ephraim be given up, as an incorrigible son is given up to be disinherited, as an incurable patient is given over by his physician. Let him be given up to ruin. Let Israel be delivered into the enemy's hand, as a lamb to the lion to be torn in pieces; let them be made as Admah and set as Zeboim, the two cities that with Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon them; let them be utterly and irreparably ruined, and be made as like these cities in desolation as they have been in sin. Let that curse which is written in the law be executed upon them, that the *whole land shall be brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim,* ^{Deuteronomy 29:23} Ephraim and Israel deserve to be thus abandoned, and God will do them no wrong if he deal thus with them.

(2.) The opposition that mercy makes to these proposals: *How shall I do it?* As the tender father reasons with himself, “How can I cast off my untoward son? for he is my son, though he be untoward; how can I find in my heart to do it?” Thus, “Ephraim has been a dear son, a pleasant child: *How can I do it?* He is ripe for ruin; judgments stand ready to seize him; there wants nothing but *giving him up*, but I cannot do it. They have been a people near unto me; there are yet some good among them; theirs are the children of the covenant; if they be ruined, the enemy will triumph; it may be they will yet repent and reform; and therefore how can I do it?” Note, The God of heaven is slow to anger, and is especially loth to abandon a people to utter ruin that have been in special relation to him. See how mercy works upon the mention of those severe proceedings: *My heart is turned within me*, as we say, Our heart fails us, when we come to do a thing that is against the grain with us. God speaks as if he were conscious to himself of a strange striving of affections in compassion to Israel: as ²¹⁰Lamentations 1:20, *My bowels are troubled; my heart is turned within me*. As it follows here, *My repentings are kindled together*. His bowels yearned towards them, and *his soul was grieved* for their sin and misery, ¹⁰¹⁶Judges 10:16. Compare ²⁸⁰Jeremiah 31:20. *Since I spoke against him my bowels are troubled for him*. When God was to give up his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, and a Saviour for sinners, he did not say, How shall I give him up? No, he *spared not his own Son*; it *pleased the Lord to bruise him*; and *therefore* God spared not him, that he might spare us. But this is only the language of the day of his patience; when men have sinned that away, and the great day of his wrath comes, then no difficulty is made of it; nay, *I will laugh at their calamity*.

2. His gracious determination of this debate. After a long contest mercy in the issue rejoices against judgment, has the last word, and carries the day, v. 9. It is decreed that the reprieve shall be lengthened out yet longer, and *I will not now execute the fierceness of my anger*, though I am angry; though they shall not go altogether unpunished, yet he will mitigate the sentence and abate the rigour of it. He will show himself to be justly angry, but not implacably so; they shall be corrected, but not consumed. *I will not return to destroy Ephraim*; the judgments that have been inflicted shall not be repeated, shall not go so deep as they have deserved. He will not *return to destroy*, as soldiers, when they have pillaged a town once, return a second time, to take more, as when *what the palmer-worm has left the locust has eaten*. It is added, in the close of the verse, “*I will not enter*

into the city, into Samaria, or any other of their cities; I will not enter into them as an enemy, utterly to destroy them, and lay them waste, as I did the cities of Admah and Zeboim.”

3. The ground and reason of this determination: *For I am God and not man, the Holy One of Israel.* To encourage them, to hope that they shall find mercy, consider,

(1.) What he is in himself: *He is God, and not man*, as in other things, so in pardoning sin and sparing sinners. If they had offended a man like themselves, he would not, he could not have borne it; his passion would have overpowered his compassion, and he would have executed the fierceness of his anger; but *I am God, and not man.* He is *Lord of his anger*, whereas men's anger commonly lords it over them. If an earthly prince were in such a strait between justice and mercy, he would be at a loss how to compromise the matter between them; but he who is God, and not man, knows how to find out an expedient to secure the honour of his justice and yet advance the honour of his mercy. Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of our God, whose thoughts and ways, in receiving returning sinners, are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth, ^{<250>}Isaiah 55:9. Note, It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies to remember that he is *God, and not man.* He is *the Holy One.* One would think this were a reason why he should reject such a provoking people. No; God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to his holiness, but very much to the honour of it, as he is *faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, and therein *declares his righteousness*, now Christ has purchased the pardon and he has promised it.

(2.) What he is to them; he is the *Holy One in the midst of thee*; his holiness is engaged for the good of his church, and even in this corrupt and degenerate land and age there were some that gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and he required of them all to be *holy as he is*, ^{<680>}Leviticus 19:2. As long as we have the *Holy One in the midst of us* we are safe and well; but woe to us when he leaves us! Note, Those who submit to the influence may take the comfort of God's holiness.

II. Here is his wonderful forwardness to do good for Israel, which appears in this, that he will qualify them to receive the good he designs for them (v. 10, 11): *They shall walk after the Lord.* This respects the same favour

with that (^{<30B>}Hosea 3:5), *They shall return, and seek the Lord their God*; it is spoken of the ten tribes, and had its accomplishment, in part, in the return of some of them with those of the two tribes in Ezra's time; but it had its more full accomplishment in God's spiritual Israel, the gospel-church, brought together and incorporated by the gospel of Christ. The ancient Jews referred it to the time of the Messiah; the learned Dr. Pocock looks upon it as a prophecy of Christ's coming to preach the gospel to the dispersed children of Israel, the children of God that were scattered abroad. And then observe,

1. How they were to be called and brought together: *The Lord shall roar like a lion. The word of the Lord (so says the Chaldee) shall be as a lion that roars. Christ is called the lion of the tribe of Judah, and his gospel, in the beginning of it, was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. When Christ cried with a loud voice it was as when a lion roared,* (^{<60B>}Revelation 10:3). The voice of the gospel was heard afar, as the *roaring of a lion*, and it was a *mighty voice*. See (^{<20B>}Joel 3:16).
2. What impression this call should make upon them, such an impression as the roaring of a lion makes upon all the beasts of the forest: *When he shall roar then the children shall tremble.* See (^{<30B>}Amos 3:8), *The lion has roared; the Lord God has spoken; and then who will not fear?* When those whose hearts the gospel reached trembled, and were astonished, and cried out, *What shall we do?* — when they were by it put upon working out their salvation, and worshipping God with fear and trembling, then this promise was fulfilled. *The children shall tremble from the west.* The dispersed Jews were carried eastward, to Assyria and Babylon, and those that returned came from the east; therefore this seems to have reference to the calling of the Gentiles that lay westward from Canaan, for that way especially the gospel spread. They shall *tremble*; they shall move and come with trembling, with care and haste, *from the west*, from the nations that lay that way, to the mountain of the Lord (^{<20B>}Isaiah 2:3), to the gospel-Jerusalem, upon hearing the alarm of the gospel. The apostle speaks of *mighty signs and wonders* that were wrought by the preaching of the gospel from *Jerusalem round about to Illyricum*, (^{<50B>}Romans 15:19). Then the children trembled from the west. And, whereas Israel after the flesh was dispersed in Egypt and Assyria, it is promised that they shall be effectually summoned thence (v. 11): *They shall tremble; they shall come trembling, and with all haste, as a bird upon the wing, out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria*; a dove is noted for swift and constant

flight, especially when she flies *to her windows*, which the flocking of Jews and Gentiles to the church is here compared to, as it is ²⁰⁰⁸ Isaiah 60:8. Wherever those are that belong to the election of grace — east, west, north, or south — they shall *hear the joyful sound*, and be wrought upon by it; those of Egypt and Assyria shall come together; those that lay most remote from each other shall meet in Christ, and be incorporated in the church. Of the uniting of Egypt and Assyria, it was prophesied, ²⁰²³ Isaiah 19:23.

3. What effect these impressions should have upon them. Being *moved with fear*, they shall flee to the ark: *They shall walk after the Lord*, after *the service of the Lord* (so the Chaldee); they shall take the Lord Christ for their *leader and commander*; they shall enlist themselves under him as the captain of their salvation, and give up themselves to the direction of the Spirit as their guide by the word; they shall *leave all to follow Christ*, as becomes *disciples*. Note, Our holy trembling at the word of Christ will draw us to him, not drive us from him. When he *roars like a lion* the slaves tremble and flee from him, the children tremble and flee to him.

4. What entertainment they shall meet with at their return (v. 11): *I will place them in their houses* (all those that come at the gospel-call shall have a place and a name in the gospel-church, in the particular churches which are their houses, to which they pertain; they shall dwell in God, and be at home in him, both easy and safe, as a man in his own house; they shall have mansions, for there are many in *our Father's house*), in his tabernacle on earth and his temple in heaven, in *everlasting habitations*, which may be called *their houses*, for they are *the lot* they shall stand in *at the end of the days*.

III. Here is a sad complaint of the treachery of Ephraim and Israel, which may be an intimation that it is not Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual Israel, to whom the foregoing promises belong, for as for this Ephraim, this Israel, they *compass God about with lies and deceit*; all their services of him, when they pretended to compass his altar, were feigned and hypocritical; when they surrounded him with their prayers and praises, every one having a petition to present to him, they *lied to him with their mouth and flattered him with their tongue*; their pretensions were so fair, and yet their intentions so foul, that they would, if possible, have imposed upon God himself. Their professions and promises were all a cheat, and

yet with these they thought to compass God about, to enclose him as it were, to keep him among them, and prevent his leaving them.

IV. Here is a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, which they held fast, and this comes in as an aggravation of the perfidiousness of the ten tribes, and a reason why God had that mercy in store for Judah which he had not for Israel (~~3116~~ Hosea 1:6, 7), for *Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints, or with the Most Holy.*

1. *Judah rules with God*, that is, he serves God, and the service of God is not only true liberty and freedom, but it is dignity and dominion. *Judah rules*, that is, the princes and governors of Judah *rule with God*; they use their power for him, for his honour, and the support of his interest. Those *rule with God that rule in the fear of God* (~~4123~~ 2 Samuel 23:3), and it is their honour to do so, and their praise shall be *of God*, as Judah's here is. *Judah is Israel — a prince with God.*

2. He is *faithful with the holy God*, keeps close to his worship and *to his saints*, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose steps they faithfully tread in. They *walk in the way of good men*; and those that do so *rule with God*, they have a mighty interest in Heaven. Judah *yet* does thus, which intimates that the time would come when Judah also would revolt and degenerate. Note, When we see how many there are that compass God about *with lies and deceit* it may be a comfort to us to think that God has his remnant that cleave to him with purpose of heart, and are faithful to his saints; and for those who are thus faithful unto death is reserved a crown of life, when hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion without.