

# CHAPTER 10

In this chapter,

- I.** The people of Israel are charged with gross corruptions in the worship of God and are threatened with the destruction of their images and altars (v. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8).
- II.** They are charged with corruptions in the administration of the civil government and are threatened with the ruin of that (v. 3, 4, 7).
- III.** They are charged with imitating the sins of their fathers, and with security in their own sins, and are threatened with smarting humbling judgments (v. 9-11).
- IV.** They are earnestly invited to repent and reform, and are threatened with ruin if they did not (v. 12-15).

## HOSEA 10:1-8

### DEGENERACY OF ISRAEL

Observe,

**I.** What the sins are which are here laid to Israel's charge, the national sins which bring down national judgment. The prophet deals plainly with them; for what good would it do them to be flattered?

**1.** They were not fruitful in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Here all their other wickedness began (v. 1): *Israel is an empty vine*. The church of God is fitly compared to a *vine*, weak, and of an unpromising outside, yet spreading and fruitful; believers are branches of that vine, and partake of its root and fatness. But this was the character of Israel, they were as *an empty vine*, a vine that had no sap or virtue in it, and therefore none of those good fruits produced by it that were expected from it, with which God and man should be honoured. Note, There are many who, though they have not become *degenerate* vines, are yet *empty vines*, have no good in them. A vine is of all trees least serviceable if it do not bear fruit. It is thenceforth good for nothing, ~~201~~ Ezekiel 15:3, 5. And those that

bring forth no grapes will soon come to bring forth wild grapes; those that do no good will do hurt. He is an *empty vine*, for *he brings forth fruit to himself*. What good there is in him is not directed to the glory of God, but he takes the praise of it to himself, and prides himself in it. Christians live not to themselves (<sup><546></sup>Romans 14:6), but hypocrites make self their centre; they *eat and drink to themselves*, <sup><305></sup>Zechariah 7:5, 6. Or Israel is by the judgments of God *emptied* and *spoiled* of all his wealth, because he made use of it in the service of his lusts, and not to the honour of God who gave it to him. Note, What we do not rightly employ we may justly expect to be emptied of.

**2.** They multiplied their altars and images, and the more bountiful God's providence was to them the more prodigal they were in serving their idols: *According to the multitude of his fruit* which his land brought forth *he has increased the altars*, and *according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images*. Note, It is a great affront to God, and an abuse of his goodness, when the more mercies we receive from him the more sins we commit against him, and when the more wealth men have the more mischief they do. Should not we be thus abundant in the service of our God, as they were in the service of their idols? As we find our estates increasing, we should proportionably abound the more in works of piety and charity.

**3.** Their hearts were divided, v. 2.

**(1.)** They were divided among themselves. They were at variance about their idols, some for one, some for another, at variance about their kings, whose separate interests made parties in the kingdom, and in them their very hearts were divided, and alienated one from another, and there was no such thing as cordial friendship to be found among them; it follows therefore, *Now shall they be found faulty*. Note, The divisions and animosities of a people are the causes of much sin and the presages of ruin.

**(2.)** They were divided between God and their idols. They had a remaining affection in their hearts for God, but a reigning affection for their idols. They *halted between God and Baal*, that was the dividing of their heart. But God is the sovereign of the heart and he will by no means endure a rival; he will either have all or none. Satan, like the pretended mother, says, *Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it*; but, if this be yielded to, God says, *Nay, let him take it all*. A heart thus divided will be *found*

*faulty*, and be rejected as treacherous in covenanting with God. Note, A heart divided between God and mammon, though it may trim the matter so as to appear plausible, will, in the day of discovery, be *found faulty*.

**4.** They made no conscience of what they said and what they did in the most solemn manner, v. 4.

**(1.)** Not of what they said in swearing, which is the most solemn speaking: *They have spoken words*, and words only, for they meant not as they said; they did *verba dare* — *give words*. They *swore falsely in making a covenant*; they were deceitful in their covenanting with God, the covenant of circumcision, the fair promises they made of reformation when they were in distress; and no marvel if those that were false to their God were false to all mankind. They contracted such a habit of treachery that they broke through the most sacred bonds, and made nothing of them; subjects violated their oaths of allegiance and their kings their coronation-oaths; they broke their leagues with the nations they were in alliance with, nor was any conscience made of contracts between private persons.

**(2.)** Nor of what they did in judgment, which is the most solemn acting. Justice could not take place when men made nothing of forswearing themselves; for thus *judgment*, which should have been a healing medicinal plant and of a sweet smell, *sprang up as hemlock*, which is both nauseous and noxious, *in the furrows of the field*, in the field that was ploughed and furrowed for good corn. Note, God is greatly offended with corruptions, not only in his own worship, but in the administration of justice between man and man, and the dishonesty of a people shall be the ground of his controversy with them as well as their idolatry and impiety; for God's laws are intended for man's benefit and the good of the community, as well as for God's honour, and the profanation of courts of justice shall be avenged as surely as the profanation of temples.

**II.** What the judgments are with which Israel should be punished for these sins; they sinned both in civil and religious matters, and in both they shall be punished.

**1.** They shall have no joy of their kings and of their government. Because justice is turned into oppression, therefore those who are entrusted with the administration of it, and should be blessings to the state, shall be complained of as the burdens of it (v. 3), and those that would not rule their people well shall not be able to protect them: *Now they shall say*,

“*We have no king*, that is, we are as if we had none, we have none to do us any good nor stand us in any stead, none to keep us from destroying ourselves or being destroyed by our enemies, none to preserve the public peace nor to fight our battles; and justly has this come to us. *Because we feared not the Lord*, when we were safe under the protection of our kings, therefore we are rejected by him, and then *what shall a king do for us?* What good can we expect from a king when we have forfeited the favour of our God?” Note, Those that cast off the fear of God are not likely to have joy of any of their creature-comforts; nor will men's loyalty to their prince befriend them without religion, for, though that may engage him to be for them, what good will that do them if God be against them? Those that keep themselves in the fear and favour of God may say, with triumph, “What can the greatest of men do against us?” But those that throw themselves out of his protection must say, with despair, “What can the greatest of men do for us?” He was a king that said, *If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee?* Yet he is a fool that says, If a king cannot help us, we must perish (as these intimate here), for God can do that for us which kings cannot. Time was when they doted upon having a king; but now what can a king (who, they thought, could do any thing) do for them? God can make people sick of those creature-confidences which they were most fond of. This is their complaint when their king is disabled to help them, yet this is not the worst; their civil government shall not only be weakened, but quite destroyed (v. 7): *As for Samaria*, the royal city, which is now almost all that is left, *her king is cut off as the foam from the water*. The foam swims uppermost, and makes a great show upon the face of the water, yet it is but a heap of bubbles raised by the troubling of the water. Such were the kings of Israel, after their revolt from the house of David, a mere scum; their government had no foundation. No better are the greatest of kings when they set up in opposition to God; when God comes to contend with them by his judgments he can as easily disperse and dissolve them, and bring them to nothing, as the froth upon the water.

**2.** They shall have no joy of their idols and of their worship of them. And miserable is the case of that people whose gods fail them when their kings do.

**(1.)** The idols they had made, and the altars they had set up in honour of them, should be broken down, and spoiled, and carried away, as common plunder, by the victorious enemy: *He shall break down their altars*. God shall do it by the hand of the Assyrians: the Assyrians shall do it by order

from God. *He shall spoil their images*, v. 2. Note, What men make idols of it is just with God to *break down* and *spoil*. But the calf at Bethel was the sovereign idol; it was this that the inhabitants of Samaria doted most upon; now it is here foretold that this should be destroyed: *The glory of it has departed from it* (v. 5) when it is thrown down and defaced, no more to be worshipped; but this is not all: *It shall also be carried to Assyria* (as some think that the calf at Dan was some time before) *for a present to king Jareb*. It was carried to him as a rich booty (for it was a golden calf, and probably adorned with the gifts and offerings of its worshippers) and as a trophy of victory over their enemies: and what more glorious trophy could they bring than this, or more incontestable proof of an absolute conquest? Thus it is said, *The sin of Israel shall be destroyed* (v. 8), that is, the idols which they made the matter of their sin; it is said of them, *They became a sin to all Israel*, <sup><1123></sup>1 Kings 12:30. Note, If the grace of God prevail not to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols, *the high places* shall be destroyed, the *high places of Aven*, that is, of *Bethaven* (v. 5) or *Bethel*; it was called *the house of God* (so Bethel signifies), but now it is called *the house of iniquity*, nay, *iniquity* itself. The kings did not, as they ought to have done, *take away the high places* by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war; so that *the thorn and the thistle* shall *come up on their altars*, that is, they shall lie in ruins. Their altars, while they stood, were as thorns and thistles, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse; justly therefore are they buried in thorns and thistles.

**(2.)** The destruction of their idols, their altars, and their high places, shall be the occasion of sorrow, and shame, and terror to them.

[1.] It shall be an occasion of sorrow to them. When the calf at Bethel is broken *the people thereof shall mourn over it*. They looked upon the calf to be the protector of their nation, and, when that was gone, thought they must all be undone, which made the poor ignorant people that were deluded into the love of it lament bitterly, as Micah did (<sup><0724></sup>Judges 18:24), *You have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* The priests that had rejoiced in it shall now mourn for it with the people. Note, Whatever men make a god of they will mourn for the loss of; and an inordinate sorrow for the loss of any worldly good is a sign we made an idol of it. They used to be very merry in the worship of their idols, but now they shall mourn over them; for sinful mirth shall, sooner or later, be turned into mourning.

[2.] It shall be an occasion of shame to them (v. 6): *Ephraim shall receive shame* when he sees the gods he trusted to carried into captivity, and *Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel*, in putting such confidence in them and paying such adoration to them. God's ark and altars were never thrown down till the people rejected them; but the idolatrous altars were thrown down when the people were doting on them, which shows that the contempt of the former, and the veneration for the latter, were the sins for which God visited them.

[3.] It shall be an occasion of fear to them (v. 5): *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear*; they shall be in pain for their gods and afraid of losing them; or, rather, they shall be in pain for themselves and their children and families, when they see the judgments of God breaking in upon them and beginning with their idols, as he *executed judgment against the gods of Egypt*, <sup><1022></sup>Exodus 12:12. Thus idolaters are brought in trembling when God arises to *shake terribly the earth*, <sup><2122></sup>Isaiah 2:21. And here (v. 8), *They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us*. The supporters of idolatry (<sup><6615></sup>Revelation 6:15, 16) are brought in calling thus in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from God's wrath.

## ~~<300>~~ HOSEA 10:9-15

### THREATENINGS OF JUDGMENT

Here,

**I.** They are put in mind of the sins of their fathers and predecessors, for which God would now reckon with them. It was told them (<sup><300></sup>Hosea 9:9) that they had *corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah*, and here (v. 9), *O Israel! thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah*. Not only the wickedness that was committed in that age is revived in this, and reacted, a copy from that original, but the wickedness that was committed in that age has been continued in a constant series and succession through all the intervening ages down to this; so that the measure of iniquity had been long in filling; and still there had been made additions to it. Or, "*Thou has sinned more than in the days of Gibeah*" (so it may be read); "the sins of this age exceed those of the worst of former ages. The case was bad then, for *there they stood*; the criminals stood in their own defence, and the tribes of Israel, who undertook to chastise them for their wickedness, were

at a stand, when both in the first and in the second battle the malefactors were the victors; and *the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them* till the third engagement, and then did not overtake them all, for 600 made their escape. But thy sin is worse than theirs, and therefore thou canst not expect but that the battle against the children of iniquity should overtake thee, and overcome thee.”

**II.** They have warning given them, fair warning, of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, v. 10. God had hitherto pitied and spared them. Though they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience and forbearance; but now, “*It is in my desire that I should chastise them; it is what I have a purpose of and will take pleasure in.*” He will *rejoice over them to do them hurt*, ~~418~~Deuteronomy 28:63. Note, Because God does not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore he does desire their chastisement. And see what the chastisement is: *The people shall be gathered against them*, as all the other tribes were against Benjamin in the battle of Gibeah. One of the rabbin thus descants upon it: “Because they receive not chastisement from me by my prophets, who in my name rebuke them, I will chastise them by the hands of the people who shall be *gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows*,” that is, when they shall think to fortify themselves, as it were, within a double entrenchment. or, *When I shall bind them for their two transgressions* (so the margin reads it), meaning their corporal and spiritual whoredom, which they are so often charged with, or the *two calves* at Dan and Bethel, or those two great evils mentioned ~~418~~Jeremiah 2:13. Or, *When I shall bind them to their two furrows*, that is, bring them into servitude to the Assyrians, who shall keep them under the yoke as oxen in the plough, who are bound to the two furrows up the field and down it, and dare not, for fear of the goad, stir a step out of them. The Chaldee says, Those that are *gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them, in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows*. Thus those that would not be God's freemen shall be their enemies' slaves, and shall be made to know the difference between *God's service* and *the service of the kingdoms of the countries*, ~~418~~2 Chronicles 12:8.

**III.** They are made to know that their unacquaintedness with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, v. 11. See how nice, and tender, and delicate, Ephraim is; he is *as a heifer*

that is taught to tread out the corn, and loves that work, because, being not allowed to be muzzled, she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and the work itself was dry and easy, and both its own diversion and its own wages. “But,” says God, “I have a yoke to put upon *her fair neck*, fair as it is. *I will make Ephraim to ride*, that is, I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon (<sup>362</sup>Psalm 66:12); and *Judah* too shall be made to *plough*, and *Jacob to break the clods*,” that is, they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly as Ephraim. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardships mean that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure. The learned Dr. Pocock inclines to another sense of these words, as intimating the tender gentle methods God took with this people, to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should return to that obedience; he had managed them as the husbandman does his cattle that he trains up for service. Ephraim being as a docile heifer, fit to be employed, God took hold of *her fair neck*, to accustom her to the hand, *harnessed her*, or put the yoke of his commandments upon her, gave his people Israel a law, that, being trained up in his institutions, they might not be tempted by the usages of the heathen; he had used all fair and likely means with them to keep them in their obedience, had set *Judah to plough* and *Jacob to break the clods*, had employed them in the observance of precepts proper for them; and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

**IV.** They are invited and encouraged to return to God by prayer, repentance, and reformation, v. 12, 13. See here,

**1.** The duties they are called to. They are *God's husbandry* (<sup>400</sup>1 Corinthians 3:9), and the duties are expressed in language borrowed from the husbandman's calling. If they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service.

**(1.)** Let them *break up the fallow ground*; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as weeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them; let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed, that it may take root. See <sup>200</sup>Jeremiah 4:3.



(2.) Let them *sow to themselves in righteousness*; let them return to the practice of good works, according to the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness; let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them *sow to the Spirit*, as the apostle speaks, <sup><487></sup>Galatians 6:7, 8. Every action is seed sown. Let them *sow in righteousness*; let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do, and they themselves shall have the benefit of it.

(3.) Let them *seek the Lord*; let them look up to him for his grace, and beg of him to bless the *seed sown*. The husbandman must plough and sow with an eye to God, asking of him rain in the season thereof.

2. The arguments used for the pressing of these duties. Consider,

(1.) It is time to do it; it is *high time*. The husbandman sows in seed-time, and, if that time be far spent, he applies to the work with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God when it is, in a particular manner, time to seek him.

(2.) If we do our part, God will do his. If we *sow to ourselves in righteousness* — if we be careful and diligent to do our duty, in a dependence upon his grace — he will shower down his grace upon us, will *rain righteousness*, the very thing that those need most who are to sow *in righteousness*; for *by the grace of God we are what we are*. Some apply it to Christ, who should come in the fulness of time, and for whose coming they must prepare themselves; he shall come as *the Lord our righteousness*, and shall *rain righteousness upon us*, that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in; he will grant us of it abundantly. It is foretold (<sup><3726></sup>Psalm 72:6) that *he shall come down like rain*.

(3.) If we *sow in righteousness*, we shall *reap in mercy*, which agrees with that promise, If we *sow to the Spirit*, we shall *of the Spirit reap life everlasting*. We shall reap *according to the measure of mercy* (so the word is); it shall be a great reward, according to the *riches of mercy*, such a reward, not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give, a reward, *not of debt*, but of *grace*. We reap not in merit, but in mercy. It is what is sown; God gives a body as it has pleased him.

(4.) We have *ploughed wickedness and reaped iniquity*; and the time *past of our life may suffice* that we have done so, v. 13. “You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire; and will you grudge to bear the burden and heat of the day in God’s service and in doing that which will be for your own advantage? You have done much to damn your souls; will you not undo it again, and do something to save them?”

(5.) We never got any thing in the service of sin. They have *ploughed wickedness* (that is, they have done the drudgery of sin), and they have *reaped iniquity*, that is, they have got all that is to be got by it; they have carried it on to the *harvest*, and what the better? It is all a cheat. *They have eaten the fruit of lies*, fruit that is but a lie, which looks fair, but is rotten within; the *works of darkness* are *unfruitful works*, <sup>451</sup>Ephesians 5:11; <sup>462</sup>Romans 6:21. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction.

(6.) As our comforts, so our confidences, in the service of sin will certainly fail us: “*Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men*; thou has stayed thyself upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and therefore hast ventured to plough wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee; come therefore, and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee.”

V. They are threatened with utter destruction, both for their carnal practices and for their carnal confidences, v. 14, 15. *Therefore*, because thou has sown wickedness, and trusted in thy own way, *a tumult shall arise among thy people*, either by insurrections at home or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion and make a noise, much more both together.

1. Their cities and strongholds shall be a prey to the enemy: *The fortresses* which they confided in, and in which they had laid up their effects, shall be seized and rifled, as *Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle*. This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded; and probably Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who had lately put some town, or castle, or house (*Beth-arbel is the house of Arbel*), under *military execution*, which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons. God tells them that thus Samaria should be *spoiled*.

2. The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at *Beth-arbel*; when it was taken *the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children*, that is, they were both dashed in pieces together by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes. *Jusque datum sceleri — Wickedness has free course*. It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman; but see what comes of sin. *Homo homini lupus — Man is a wolf to man*, and then, *Homo homini agnus — Man is a lamb to man*.

3. Even royal blood shall be mingled with common gore: *In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off*, v. 15. Hoshea was the last king of Israel; in him the whole kingdom was *cut off* and came to a period; it may refer either to him or to some of his predecessors that were cut off by treachery. It shall be done *in a morning*, in a very little time, as suddenly as the dawning of the morning, or at the time appointed, for so the morning comes, punctually at its time. Or *in the morning*, when they think the night of calamity is over, and expect a returning day, then shall all their hopes be dashed by the sudden cutting off of their king, v. 7. Kings, though gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men. And (*lastly*) what does all this desolation owe its rise to? What is the spring of this bloodshed? He tells us (v. 15): *So shall Bethel do unto you*. Bethel was the place where one of the calves was; Gilgal, where *all their wickedness* is said to have been, was hard by; there was their *great wickedness*, the *evil of their evil* (so the word is), the sum and quintessence of their sin; and that was it that *did this to them*, that made all this havoc, for that was it that provoked God to bring it upon them. He does not say, “So shall the *king of Assyria* do to you;” but, “So shall *Bethel* do to you.” Note, Whatever mischief is done to us it is sin that does it. Are the fortresses spoiled? Are the women and children murdered? Is the king cut off? It is sin that does all this. It is sin that ruins soul, body, estate, all. *So shall Bethel do unto you*. It is *thy own wickedness* that *corrects thee* and *thy backslidings* that *reprove thee*.