

CHAPTER 13

The same strings, though generally unpleasing ones, are harped upon in this chapter that were in those before. People care not to be told either of their sin or of their danger by sin; and yet it is necessary, and for their good, that they should be told of both, nor can they better hear of either than from the word of God and from their faithful ministers, while the sin may be repented of and the danger prevented. Here,

- I.** The people of Israel are reprov'd and threaten'd for their idolatry (v. 1-4).
- II.** They are reprov'd and threaten'd for their wantonness, pride, and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity (v. 5-8).
- III.** The ruin that is coming upon them for these and all their other sins is foretold as very terrible (v. 12, 13, 15, 16).
- IV.** Those among them that yet retain a respect for their God are here encouraged to hope that he will yet appear for their relief, though their kings and princes, and all their other supports and succours, fail them (v. 9-11, 14).

HOSEA 13:1-4

REPROOFS AND THREATENINGS

Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation till after the captivity; the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab; and this is the sin which, in these verses, they are charged with. Observe,

I. The provision that God made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have, v. 4. God did what was fit to be done to keep them close to himself; what could have been done more?

1. He made known himself to them as *the Lord their God*, and took them to be his people in a peculiar manner. Both by his word and by his works all along *from the land of Egypt* he declared, *I am the Lord thy God*; he

told them so from heaven at Mount Sinai, that he was *the Lord* and *their God*, who *brought them out of the land of Egypt*. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophets and by his providences.

2. He gave them a law forbidding them to worship any other: "*Thou shalt know no God but me; not only shalt not own and worship any other, but shalt not acquaint thyself with any other, nor make the rites and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee.*" Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those commended who *have not known the depths of Satan*.

3. He gave them a good reason for it: *There is no saviour besides me*. Whatever we take for our God we expect to have for our saviour, to make us happy here and hereafter; as, where we have protection, we owe allegiance, so where we have salvation, and hope for it, we owe adoration.

II. The honour that Ephraim had, while he kept himself clear from idolatry (v. 1): *While Ephraim spoke trembling, or with trembling* (that is, as Dr. Pocock understands it, while he behaved himself towards God as his father Jacob did, with *weeping and supplications*, and spoke not proudly and insolently against God and his prophets, while he kept up a holy fear of God, and worshipped him in that fear) so long *he exalted himself in Israel*, that is, he was very considerable among the tribes and made a figure. Jeroboam, who was of that tribe, exalted himself and his family. *When he spoke there was trembling*, that is, all about him stood in awe of him; so some understand it. Note, *Those that humble themselves, especially that humble themselves before God, shall be exalted*. When people speak with modesty and jealousy of themselves, with a diffidence of their own judgment and a deference to others, they exalt themselves, they gain a reputation. But as for Ephraim he soon lost himself: *When he offended in Baal he died*, that is, he lost his reputation, his honour soon dwindled and sunk, and was laid in the dust. Baal is here put for all idolatry; when Ephraim forsook God, and took to worship images, the state received its death's wound and was never good for any thing afterwards. Note, Deserting God is the death of any person or persons.

III. The lamentable growth of idolatry among them (v. 2): *Now they sin more and more*. When once he began to *offend in Baal* the ice was broken, and he grew worse and worse, coveted more idols, doted more upon those he had, and grew more ridiculous in the worship of them. Note, The way

of idolatry, as of other sins, is down-hill, and men cannot easily stop themselves. It is the sad case of all those who have forsaken God that they sin yet more and more. Let us trace them in their apostasy.

1. They made themselves *molten images*, proud to have gods that they could cast into what mould they pleased; probably these were the calves in miniature like the silver shrines for Diana; the zealots for the calf-worship carried about with them, it may be, images of the gods they worshipped, made on purpose *for themselves*.

2. They made them of *their silver*, and then doubted not of their property in them, when they purchased them with their own money or made them of their own plate melted down for that purpose. See what cost they put themselves to in the service of their idols, which they honoured with the best they had, and therefore made their molten images of silver.

3. They made them *according to their own understanding*, according to their own fancy. They consulted with themselves what shape they should make their idol in, and made it accordingly, *a god according to the best of their judgment*. Or *according to their own likeness*, in the form of a man. And, when they made their idols men like themselves in shape, they made themselves stocks and stones like them in reality; for *those that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them*.

4. It was *all the work of the craftsmen*. Their images did not pretend, like that of Diana, to have come down from Jupiter (⁴⁸⁵Acts 19:35); no, perhaps the workmen stamped their names upon them, such an idol was such a man's work. See ³⁸⁶Hosea 8:6; ²⁴⁹Isaiah 44:9, etc.

5. Though they were thus the work of their hands, yet they were the beloved of their souls; for they say of them, *Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves*. Either the priests called upon the people thus to pay their homage, or the people, who were not allowed to come so near themselves, called upon the *men that sacrificed*, the priests that attended for them, to *kiss the calves* in their name and stead, because they could not reach to do it, so very fond were they of paying their utmost respects to such an idol as they were taught to have a veneration for. Though they were calves, yet, if they were gods, the worshippers, by themselves or their proxies, thus made their honours to them. They *kissed the calves*, in token of the adoration of them, affection for them, and allegiance to them, as theirs.

Thus we are directed to *kiss the Son*, to take him for our Lord and our God.

IV. Threatenings of wrath for their idolatry. The Lord, whose name is *Jealous*, is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another; and therefore all those that *worship images* shall be *confounded*, especially if Ephraim do it, ^{<907>}Psalm 97:7. Because they are so fond of kissing their calves, therefore God will give them sensible convictions of their folly, v. 3. They promise themselves a great del of safety and satisfaction in the worship of their idols, and that their prosperity will thereby be established; but God tells them that they shall be disappointed, and *driven away in their wickedness*. This is illustrated by four similitudes: — They shall be,

1. As the *morning cloud*, which promises showers of rain to the parched ground.

2. As the *early dew*, which seems to be an earnest of such showers. But both *pass away*, and the day proves as dry and hot as ever; so fleet and transitory their profession of piety was (^{<306>}Hosea 6:4), and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them, and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed, and so will all theirs be that make an idol of this world.

3. They are *as the chaff*, light and worthless; and they shall be driven *as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor*, ^{<904>}Psalm 1:4; 25:5; ^{<318>}Job 21:18. Nay,

4. They are *as the smoke*, noisome and offensive (see ^{<215>}Isaiah 65:5), and they shall be driven away *as the smoke out of the chimneys*, that is soon dissipated and disappears, ^{<182>}Psalm 68:2. Note, No solid lasting comfort is to be expected any where but in God.

^{<235>}HOSEA 13:5-8

INGRATITUDE OF ISRAEL

We may observe here,

1. The plentiful provision God had made for Israel and the seasonable supplies he had blessed them with (v. 5): “*I did know thee in the wilderness, took cognizance of thy case and made provision for thee, even in a land of great drought, when thou wast in extreme distress, and when no relief was to be had in an ordinary way.*” See a description of this wilderness, ^{<8885>}Deuteronomy 8:15, ^{<2016>}Jeremiah 2:6, and say, The God that knew them, and owned them, and fed them there, was a *friend indeed*, for he was a *friend at need* and an all-sufficient friend, that could victual so vast an army when all ordinary ways of provision were cut off, and where, if miracles had not been their daily bread, they must all have perished. Note, Help at an exigency lays under peculiar obligations and must never be forgotten.

2. Their unworthy ungrateful abuse of God's favour to them. God not only took care of them in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture. And (v. 6) *according to their pasture so were they filled*. God gave them both plenty and dainties, and they did not spare it, but, having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan they fed themselves *to the full*. And this was no hopeful presage; it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and had learned to deny themselves; but what was the effect of it? *They were filled, and their heart was exalted*. Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent, and secure. The best comment upon this is that of Moses, ^{<5913>}Deuteronomy 32:13-15. But *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked*. When the body was stuffed up with plenty the soul was puffed up with pride. Then they began to think their religion a thing below them, and they could not persuade themselves to stoop to the services of it. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God*. When they were poor and lame in the wilderness they thought it was necessary for them to keep in with God; but when they were replenished and established in Canaan they began to think they had no further need of him: *Their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me*. Note, Worldly prosperity, when it feeds men's pride, makes them forgetful of God; for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled, what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said to him, *Depart from us*, ^{<8217>}Job 22:17. It is sad that those favours which ought to make us mindful of God, and studious what we shall render to him, should make us unmindful of him, and regardless what we do against him. We ought to know that we live

upon God when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles.

3. God's just resentment of their base ingratitude, v. 7, 8. The judgments threatened (v. 3) intimated the departure of all good from them. The threatenings here go further, and intimate the breaking in of all evils upon them; for God, who had so much befriended them, now *turns to be their enemy and fights against them*, which is expressed here very terribly: *I will be unto them as a lion and as a leopard*. The lion is strong, and there is no resisting him. The leopard is here taken notice of to be crafty and vigilant: *As a leopard by the way will I observe them*. As that beast of prey lies in wait by the road-side to catch travellers, and devour them, so will God by his judgments *watch over them* to do them hurt, as he had watched over them to do them good, ^{<2447>}Jeremiah 44:27. No opportunity shall be let slip that may accelerate or aggravate their ruin (^{<2456>}Jeremiah 5:6): *A leopard shall watch over their cities*. A lynx, or spotted beast (and such the leopard is), is noted for quicksightedness above any creature (*lynx visu — the eyes of a lynx*), and so it intimates that not only the power, but the wisdom of God is engaged against those whom he has a controversy with. Some read it (and the original will bear it), *I will be as a leopard in the way of Assyria*. The judgments of God shall surprise them just when they are going to the Assyrians to seek for protection and help from them. It is added, *I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved*, and thereby exasperated and made more cruel (^{<1178>}2 Samuel 17:8, ^{<1185>}Proverbs 28:15), which intimates how highly God was provoked, and he would make them feel it: He will *rend the caul of their heart*. The lion is observed to aim at the heart of the beasts he preys upon, and thus will God *devour them like a lion*. He will send such judgments upon them as shall prey upon their spirits and consume their vitals. Their heart was exalted (v. 6), but God will take an effectual course to bring it down: *The wild beast shall tear them*; not only God will be as a lion and leopard to them, but the metaphor shall be fulfilled in the letter, for *noisome beasts* are one of the *four sore judgments* with which God will destroy a provoking people, ^{<2445>}Ezekiel 14:15.

Now all this teaches us,

1. That abused goodness turns into the greater severity. Those who despise God and affront him, when he is to them as a careful tender shepherd, shall find he will be even to his own flock as the beasts of prey are. Those

whom God has in vain *endured with much long-suffering*, and invited with much affection, in them he will *show his wrath* and make them *vessels* of it, ⁴¹²Romans 9:22. *Patentia laesa fit furor — Despised patience will turn into fury.*

2. That the judgments of God, when they come with commission against impenitent sinners, will be irresistible and very terrible. They will *rend the caul of the heart*, will fill the soul with confusion, and tear that in pieces; and we are as unable to grapple with them as a lamb is to make his part good against a roaring lion, for *who knows the power of God's anger? Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord*, let us be persuaded to make peace with him; for are we stronger than he?

⁴¹³HOSEA 13:9-16

PROMISES OF MERCY

The first of these verses is the summary, or contents, of all the rest (v. 9), where we have,

1. All the blame of Israel's ruin laid upon themselves: *O Israel! thy perdition is thence*; it is of and from thyself; or, *“It has destroyed thee, O Israel! that is, all that sin and folly of thine which thou art before charged with. As thy own wickedness has many a time corrected thee, so that has now at length destroyed thee.”* Note, Wilful sinners are self-destroyers. Obstinate impenitence is the grossest self-murder. Those that are *destroyed of the destroyer* have their blood upon their own head; they have *destroyed themselves*.

2. All the glory of Israel's relief ascribed to God: *But in me is thy help*. That is,

(1.) It might have been: “I would have helped thee and healed thee, but thou wouldst not be healed and helped, but wast resolutely set upon thy own destruction.” This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, not only that they did that which tended to their own ruin, but that they opposed the offers God made them and the methods he took with them to prevent it: *I would have gathered them, and they would not*. They might have been easily and effectually helped, but they put the help away from them. Nay,

(2.) It may be: “Thy case is bad, but it is not desperate. *Thou hast destroyed thyself*; but come to me, and I will help thee.” This is a plank thrown out after shipwreck, and greatly magnifies not only the power of God, that he can help when things are at the worst, can help those that cannot help themselves, but the riches of his grace, that he will help those that have destroyed themselves and therefore might justly be left to perish, that he will help those that have long refused his help. Dr. Pocock gives a different reading and sense of this verse: “*O Israel! this has destroyed thee, that in me is thy help*. Presuming upon God and his favour has emboldened thee in those wicked ways which have been thy ruin.”

Now, in the rest of these verses, we may see,

I. How Israel destroyed themselves. It is said (v. 16), *They rebelled against God*, revolted from their allegiance to him, entered into a confederacy with his enemies, and took up arms against him; and this was the thing that ruined them, for never any hardened themselves against God and prospered. Note, Those that rebel against their God destroy themselves, for they make him their enemy for whom they are an unequal match.

1. They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so they destroy themselves. They are doing that, every day, which will be remembered against them another day (v. 12): *The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin is hid*; God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him and reckon with him for it afterwards. Their former sins contributed to their present destruction; for they were *laid up in store with God*, ^{<6524>}Deuteronomy 32:34, 35; ^{<8447>}Job 14:17. It is laid up in safety, and will not be forgotten, nor the evidence against him lost; but it is laid up in secret; it is hid; the sinner himself is not aware of it. It is bound up in God's omniscience, in the sinner's own conscience. Note, The sin of sinners is not forgotten till it is pardoned, but an exact account is kept of it, which will be opened in proper time.

2. They make no haste to repent and help themselves when they are under divine rebukes; they are their own ruin because they will not do what they should do towards their own salvation, v. 13.

(1.) They are brought into trouble and distress by sin: *The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him*. They shall smart for sin, and so be made sensible of it; they shall be thrown into pangs and agonies by it, very

sharp and severe, and yet, like the pains of a woman in labour, hopeful and promising, and in order to deliverance; and by these, though God corrects them, yet he designs their good. They are chastened, that they may not be destroyed. But,

(2.) They are not by these forwarded as they ought to be towards repentance and reformation, which would cause their sorrows to issue in true joy: *He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long, as he does, in the place of the breaking forth of children, but, being brought to the birth, should struggle to get forth, lest he be stifled and still-born at last.* Were the child which the mother is in travail of capable of understanding its own case, we should reckon it an unwise child that would choose to stay long in the birth; for the *captive exile hasteth to be loosed, lest he die in the pit,* ^{צפיה} Isaiah 51:14. Note, Those may justly be reckoned their own destroyers who defer and put off their repentance, by which alone they might help themselves. Those are in danger of miscarrying in conversion who delay it, and will not put forth themselves to speed the work and bring it to an issue.

3. *Therefore* they are destroyed because they have done that which will be their certain ruin and neglected that which would have been their only relief. Here is a sad description of the desolation they are doomed to, v. 15, 16. It is here taken for granted that *Ephraim is fruitful among his children;* his name signifies *fruitfulness.* He is fruitful in respect of the plentiful products of his country and the great numbers of its inhabitants; it was both a rich and a populous tribe, as was foretold concerning it; but sin turns this fruitful tribe into barrenness. *Joseph was a fruitful bough,* but for sin it was blasted. The instrument is an *east wind,* representing a foreign enemy that should invade it. It is called the *wind of the Lord,* not only because it shall be a very great and strong wind, but because it shall be sent by divine direction; it shall come *from the Lord,* and do whatever he appoints; and see what effect it shall have upon that flourishing tribe, what desolations war shall make.

(1.) Was it a rich tribe? The foreign enemy shall make it poor enough. This *wind of the Lord* shall come up *from the wilderness,* a freezing blasting wind, and shall *dry up the springs and fountains* with which this tree is watered, shall exhaust the sources of its wealth. The invader shall waste the country and so impoverish the husbandman, shall intercept trade and commerce and so impoverish the merchant; and let not the great men,

whose wealth lies in their rich furniture, think that they shall be exempted from the judgment, for he shall *spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels*. See the folly of those that lay up their treasure on earth, that lay it up in *pleasant vessels* (*vessels of desire*, so the word is), on which they set their affections, and in which they place their comfort and satisfaction. This is treasure that may be spoiled and that they may be spoiled of; it is what either moth or rust may corrupt, or what thieves and soldiers may steal and carry away. But wise and happy are those who have laid up their treasures in heaven, and in the pleasant things of that world, which cannot be spoiled, which they cannot be stripped of; ever happy are they, and therefore truly wise.

(2.) Was it a populous tribe, and numerous? The enemy shall depopulate it and make its men few: *Samaria shall become desolate*, without inhabitants.

[1.] Those shall be cut off who are the guard and joy of the present generation; the men who bear arms shall bear them to no purpose, for *they shall fall by the sword*, so that there shall be none to make head against the fury of the conqueror nor to take care of the concerns either of the public or of private families.

[2.] Those shall be cut off who are the seed and hope of the next generation, who should rise up in the places of those who fell by the sword; the whole nation must be rooted out, and therefore *the infants shall be dashed to pieces*, in the most cruel and barbarous manner, and, which is if possible yet more inhuman, *the women with child shall be ripped up*. Thus shall the glory of *Samaria flee away from the birth, and from the womb*, ~~<XIII>~~ Hosea 9:11; 10:14. See instances of this cruelty, ~~<XIII>~~ 2 Kings 8:12; 15:16; ~~<XIII>~~ Amos 1:13.

II. Let us now see how God was the help of this self-destroying people, how he was their only help (v. 10): *I will be thy King*, to rule and save thee. Though they had refused to be his subjects and had rebelled against him, yet he would still be their King and would not abandon them. The business and care of a good king is to keep his people, not only from ruined by foreign enemies, but from ruining themselves and one another. Thus will God yet be Israel's King, as he was *their King of old*. Note, Our case would be sad indeed if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

1. God will be their King when they have no other king; he will protect and save them when those are cut off and gone who should have been their protectors and saviours: *I will be he* (so v. 10 may be read), he that shall help thee. “*Where is the king that may save thee in all thy cities, that may go in and out before thee, and fight thy battles, when thy cities are invaded by a foreign power, and suppress the more dangerous quarrels of thy citizens among themselves? Where are thy judges, who by administering public justice should preserve the public peace? For it is righteousness and peace that kiss each other. Where are thy judges that thou hadst such a desire of and such a dependence upon, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?*” This refers,

(1.) To the foolish wicked desire which the whole nation had of a kingly government, being weary of the theocracy, or divine government, which they had been under during the time of the *Judges*, because it looked too mean for them. They rejected Samuel, and in him *the Lord*, when they said, *Give us a king* like the nations, whereas the *Lord was their King*.

(2.) To the desire which the ten tribes had of a kingly government different from that of the house of David, because they thought that was too absolute and bore too hard upon them, and they hoped to better themselves by setting up Jeroboam. Both these are instances,

[1.] Of men's improvidence for themselves. When they are uneasy with their present lot they are fond of novelty, and think to better themselves by a change; but they are commonly disappointed, and do not find that advantage in the alteration which they promised themselves.

[2.] Of men's impiety towards God, in thinking to refine upon his appointments and amend them. God gave Israel judges and prophets for their guidance; but they were weary of them, and cried, *Give us a king and princes*. God gave them the house of David, established it by a covenant of royalty; but they were soon weary of that too, and cried, *We have no part in David*. Those destroy themselves who are not pleased with what God does for them, but think they can do better for themselves. Well, in both these requests, Providence humoured them, gave them Saul first, and afterwards Jeroboam. And what the better were they for them? Saul was *given in anger* (given in *thunder*, ⁰¹²⁸1 Samuel 12:18, 19) and soon after was *taken away in wrath*, upon Mount Gilboa. The kingly government of the ten tribes was given in anger, not only against Solomon for his defection, but against the ten tribes that desired it, for their discontent and

disaffection to the house of David; and God was now about to take that away in wrath by the power of the king of Assyria. And then, *where is thy King?* He is gone, and thou shalt abide many days *without a king, and without a prince* (~~380~~Hosea 3:4), shalt have none to save thee, none to rule thee. Note, *First*, God often gives in anger what we sinfully and inordinately desire, gives it with a curse, and with it gives us up to our own hearts' lusts. Thus he gave Israel quails. *Secondly*, What we inordinately desire we are commonly disappointed in, and it cannot save us, as we expected it should. *Thirdly*, What God gives in anger he takes away in wrath; what he gives because we did not desire it well he takes away because we did not use it well. It is the happiness of the saints that, whether God gives or takes, it is all in love, and furnishes them with matter for praise. *To the pure all things are pure*. It is the misery of the wicked that, whether God gives or takes, it is all in wrath; to them nothing is pure, nothing is comfortable.

2. God will do that for them which no other king could do if they had one (v. 14): *I will ransom them from the power of the grave*. Though Israel, according to the flesh, be abandoned to destruction, God has mercy in store for his spiritual Israel, in whom all the promises were to have their accomplishment, and this among the rest, for to them the apostle applies it (~~435~~1 Corinthians 15:55), and particularly to the blessed resurrection of believers at the great day, yet not excluding their spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life. It is promised,

(1.) That the captives shall be delivered, *shall be ransomed, from the power of the grave*. Their deliverance shall be by ransom; and we know who it was that paid their ransom, and what the ransom was, for it was the Son of man that *gave his life a ransom for many*, ~~485~~Matthew 20:28. It is he that thus redeemed them. Those who, upon their repenting and believing, are, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, acquitted from the guilt of sin and saved from death and hell, which are the *wages of sin*, are those *ransomed of the Lord* that shall, in the great day, be brought out of the grave in triumph, and it shall be as impossible for the banks of death to hold them as it was to hold their Master.

(2.) That the conqueror shall be destroyed: *O death! I will be thy plagues*. Jesus Christ was the plague and destruction of death and the grave when by death he *destroyed him that had the power of death*, and when in his

own resurrection he triumphed over the grave. But the complete destruction of them will be in the resurrection of believers at the great day, when death shall for ever be swallowed up in victory, and it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But the word which we translate *I will* may as well be rendered *Ubi nunc* — *Where now* are thy plagues? And so the apostle took it: *‘O death! where is thy plague, or sting, with which thou hast so long pestered the world? O grave! where is thy victory, or thy destruction, wherewith thou has destroyed mankind?’* Christ has abolished death, has broken the power of it and altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it. This promise he has made, and it shall be made good to all that are his; for *repentance shall be hidden from his eyes*; he will never recall this sentence passed on death and the grave, for he is not a man that he should repent. Thanks be to God therefore who gives us the victory.