

Hosea 8:1-9:17

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Date: 29 March 2026

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[0:00] Put the trumpet to your lips. An eagle is over the house of the Lord. Because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law. Israel cries out to me, our God, we acknowledge you. But Israel has rejected what is good. An enemy will pursue him.

They set up kings without my consent. They choose princes without my approval. With their silver and gold, they make idols for themselves to their own destruction. Throw out your calf idol, Samaria. My anger burns against them. How long will they be incapable of purity?

They are from Israel. This calf, a metal worker has made it. It is not God. It will be broken in pieces, that calf of Samaria. They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stock has no head. It will produce no flower. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up.

Now she is among the nations like something no one wants.

For they have gone up to Assyria like a wild donkey wandering alone. Ephraim has sold herself to lovers. Although they have sold themselves among the nations, I will now gather them together.

They will begin to waste away under the oppression of the mighty king.

Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings. These have become altars for sinning. I wrote for them the many things of my law, but they regarded them as something foreign.

[1:38] Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me, and though they eat the meat, the Lord is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins. They will return to Egypt.

Israel has forgotten his maker and built palaces. Judah has fortified many towns. But I will send fire on their cities that will consume their fortresses.

Do not rejoice, Israel. Do not be jubilant like other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God. You love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor.

Threshing floors and wine presses will not feed the people. The new wine will fail them. They will not remain in the Lord's land. Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria.

They will not pour out wine offerings to the Lord, nor will their sacrifices please him. Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners.

[2:38] All who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves. It will not come into the temple of the Lord. What will you do on the day of your appointed festivals? On the feast days of the Lord.

Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars and thorns will overrun their tents.

The days of punishment are coming. The days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this.

Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person, a maniac.

The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim. Yet snares await him on all his paths and hostility in the house of his God. They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah.

God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins. When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert. When I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree.

[3:47] But when they came to Baal Peor, they concentrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as a thing they loved. Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird.

No birth, no pregnancy, no conception. Even if they're rare children, I will bereave them of everyone. Woe to them when I turn away from them.

I have seen Ephraim like Tyre planted in a pleasant place. But Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer. Give them, Lord, what will you give them?

Give them wombs that must carry and breasts that are dry. Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house.

I will no longer love them, as their leaders are rebellious. Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring.

[4:48] My God will reject them, because they have not obeyed him. They will be wanderers among the nations. Well, if you're just joining us, then we're working our way through this prophecy of Hosea.

It is challenging, as you'll have seen from these chapters. But actually, I hope that what our reflection will be, as we look back in it and say, actually, it was worth every bit of effort that we put into looking at it, not only on Sunday mornings, but also in our community groups.

So, so far, we've tried to see the Lord behind all of this, and the character of our God, and why he's saying what he's saying. And so, we've seen so far, chapter 1, that God is faithful.

Chapters 2 and 3, God is redeemer. Chapters 4 and 5, God is judge. Last week, or two weeks ago, we looked at God as omniscient, all-knowing, all-seeing, in chapters 6 and 7. And today, in chapters 8 and 9, we're seeing God as the truth, shining light into the darkness of Israel's situation, and helping us, helping them to see as he sees.

Exposing hypocrisy as he's looking into their hearts for that heart-level obedience that is inspired by faith and trust in him. Of course, Jesus did exactly the same thing when he walked among us.

[6:11] Yes, he showed tender compassion to the lost, but he reserved his strongest words for religious hypocrites, those who said one thing and did another.

As he declared himself to be the way, the truth, the reality about God and who we are before him, and the life, the way to find God, in John 14, verse 6.

And that same Jesus, who's speaking through the word, so powerfully in John's gospel, is speaking here through the words of Isaiah today, because Jesus highlights and underlines every single word that is contained here.

He is, this word, made flesh. And we saw that he even quotes Hosea. We saw that a couple of weeks ago.

Some people, I guess when you're thinking about the Old Testament, and you come across chapters like this, and you sort of think, oh, you know, some people want to drive a wedge between the angry God of the Old Testament and the loving God of the new.

[7:17] If you're new to it, that's understandable, but actually, it's not how it is. The God of the Bible, the God of the whole Bible, is the God of grace from beginning to end.

It is in grace that God moves out to cover Adam and Eve, to cover their shame after their fall. It is in grace that he made the covenant with Israel. It is in grace that he gave them the law.

It is in grace that he gave them the land. It is in grace that he sent them, the prophets, even when they were wandering away from him, to draw them back to him. And ultimately, the greatest act of grace, of course, in the grace upon grace already given, was the giving of his own son to bear the wrath that we deserve, so that we be given the forgiveness that we don't.

And so we remember, as we're looking at these verses, that because of the cross and the power of the cross, which we're going to be looking at next Friday, everyone who truly repents and trusts in Christ has full assurance of eternal security.

Our sins cannot ultimately separate us from God because of the power of the cross, not because of what he has done, not because of what we do. However, that does not mean that there are no present consequences that may come because of our sin.

[8:38] Even as believers, we may find that God has grieved, Ephesians 4, 30, by our sins.

Hebrews 12, 6 tells us that he disciplines those whom he loves.

John tells us, that Jesus tells us in John 15, that he prunes us, maybe by bringing to bear what we have sown, as we'll be learning today, but always with a desire that we might bear fruit and enjoy the fruit of the kingdom to draw us ultimately closer to himself.

And you know, I think actually there can be great fruit born even in hardship as we sort of reflect on the scriptures and hear the scriptures speak into our situation and say, Lord, I'm experiencing hardship, but your word tells me that as I look to you, there's a harvest of righteousness to be reaped from this time.

What are the things that I need to learn in this time? But that bringing to bear the consequences of the sin that Israel has sown is what we're seeing the Lord doing with Israel in this time in Hosea. They were his covenant people under the old covenant, just as we are God's covenant people under the new covenant. And there is real continuity between the old and the new.

[10:01] It's the same holy God. It's the same gospel heart. It's the same grace. But there are also measures of discontinuity, different promises, especially in regard to the land.

So we're conscious of those things, but we want to focus on the continuities. So as we come to Hosea chapters 8 and 9, let's ask the Lord Jesus, who stands behind these words, who is the truth and the way and the life, lead us through them, to help him, to let him show us our hearts, to see us as he sees us, to see our hearts, our motives, our actions, our inactions with the same clarity that he sees, that he exercised in his earthly ministry, not to condemn us, but ultimately to expose our sin, to help us, to draw us ultimately closer to him, that he might be much more precious to us as we are precious to him.

And of course, it's a sobering thought, isn't it, to allow Jesus to shine his light into our lives. But it is a wonderfully hopeful one because we are under grace, praise the Lord.

But that same grace that is extended to us also sanctifies us, is looking and bringing about change as we leave behind the old, the sin that so easily entangles to bring, to take on the new life in Christ. So in Hosea's day, as in ours, the danger here and the danger that we're seeing is wanting the blessings and the celebrations of God while actually refusing the heart change that the gospel draws out in us.

[11:51] So with those things in mind, as we, with that kind of lens on looking at these, these two chapters, let's look at them and trust the Lord to speak to us through his words. We're going to look at it really using verse seven as our titles.

They sow the wind and we're going to see five sins that are sowing, that they've been sowing in chapter eight and they're going to reap the whirlwind and we'll see three devastating consequences of that in chapter nine.

So we'll break it up into those two chapters, sowing the wind, reaping the whirlwind. So firstly, sowing the wind and the image there is of just someone sort of throwing nothing into the air, meaningless religion and that's broken down into five specific things.

Firstly, they're sowing a broken covenant there at the beginning of chapter eight. The Lord is saying and remember with a broken heart as we've seen previously.

Verses one to three that they've broken the covenant, the marriage vows, if you like, and rebelled against his laws. They have not stayed in the lane of life that was offered to them through the giving of the commandments that those words that were supposed to cultivate life, life in the Lord to help them to prosper in their life before him.

[13:06] They were rejecting it. And here in verse two, we see that they're saying one thing and doing another. They say, oh, but God, we acknowledge you.

It could be the start of a hymn or a song or obviously they sang Psalms but you know what I mean. But as Jesus walks through his church in that time, he sees the reality.

Verse three, yes, you're saying that but there is no heart reality to it. You're saying, singing one thing in church on the Sabbath or on Sunday but you're doing something completely different through the week.

You've rejected what is good, those ten commandments that were meant to bring life. You've rejected his leadership through his faithful prophets and now they're reaping the chaos of doing, in essence, what was right in their own eyes.

Listening and taking on board false teaching, believing a false gospel. right in their own eyes or right in the eyes of the Baals that they were worshipping and their priests duped ultimately by Satan's deceptions.

[14:17] And as they break those commandments that were meant to draw them to love God in those first table of the law and love their neighbor and one another in the second table of the law, what they're resulting is broken relations.

It's broken ultimately with the Lord and with one another in their neighborhoods and their communities and their families. It's just a breakdown because of walking away from the commandments, lying, cheating, and so on.

And we might think, well, how on earth does a church, the people of God, get into this state? I was reading this week part of C.S. Lewis' essay on the weight of glory.

And C.S. Lewis kind of imagines his objectors and he writes, oh, did you think that I'm trying to weave a spell as he gives out his logic and his thoughts?

And then he muses, well, perhaps I am. But remember your fairy tales, he said. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need for the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness, which has been a load on us for nearly a hundred years.

[15 : 28] He was referring to atheistic thought in that day. And as we've seen, as we've looked through, Hosea, as we've considered the kind of 200 years or so, the three or four generations, that they have, in a sense, let evil enchant them, progressively entangle them over these generations as it has progressively declined, left them unable to hear or to see or to desire the truth of God.

There's no hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but rather unrighteousness. And we've said it before, God's love language, it's obedience.

Hear the distant words echoing back down the valley of time from the lips of Jesus into this. John 14, 15, if you love me, keep my commandments.

Or John 14 to 21, whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love him and show myself to them. What's going on here is that their relationship with the Lord has gone transactional, not relational, not covenantal.

And when a church or individual's relationship with the Lord just goes transactional, not covenantal, it becomes almost, it moves from being like a married couple to flatmates. There's no loving reality.

[16 : 55] It's just you do this, you do that, and so on. And as we do that, as we sin and we let that become our dominant way of being, we somehow disconnect how that sin affects our relationship with God.

We disconnect the word from worship and ultimately our hearts from his. Hear Jesus speak into this, Luke 6.46, where he says, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?

We can end up thinking of Jesus as Savior, but not really as Lord. We love the forgiveness of sin, but not the forsaking of sin that true repentance brings.

And the opposite of these chapters, actually, as we sort of see the darkness of sin, the opposite of what we're seeing in these chapters is actually where life in Christ can abound.

Hear Jesus saying, seek first the kingdom. You don't want to end up like this. Hunger and thirst after righteousness for a heart that it beats like his own heart, that desires that closeness of walk with him.

[18 : 15] So as we go through this chapter, I'm going to give us an opportunity to just stop and to pause and to let each of our hearts ask the Lord, Lord, show me what is one thing I am doing and need to stop or not doing that I need to start, that I might draw closer to you, that I might not grieve your spirit, but I might delight in you and find that kind of freshness of relationship with you.

Pray quietly in your heart. Pray also for the church in our nation that we would hunger and thirst after righteousness, that our desire would be for God, that we would be spared the hypocrisy of this age.

this age of Hosea, saying one thing but doing another. Praising with our lips but our hearts are far from him. And to that I say, Lord, help us to see as you see.

And what he sees, verse one, is the eagle of Assyria coming to bring their ends. And we see parallels, don't we, in the New Testament. Jesus will not stand back from such things as he pulls the lampstands from the unfaithful churches in Revelation.

The reality is that God will not be mocked. And ultimately, this is a warning. We reap what we sow. So we see them sowing ultimately a broken covenant, first of all, but then they're sowing bad choice of kings or leaders.

[19 : 51] Verse four, they set up kings without my consent. They choose princes without my approval. As with the head, so with the body in general. That's true in any organization, teaching or business or a charity.

As with the head, so with the body. And as we've said, Israel in that time does not fully parallel with the church as it was a nation state.

But we can still think of it as a church in its time. And so in their poor choice of head of leadership, that has trickled down into their society.

And actually, in a poor choice of leadership in any church, that is also true. I remember back in the day, in the very, very distant past, elders were chosen in some parishes in Scotland by how high their standing was in the community.

They didn't even have to attend church, but simply be a major figure in the community. They didn't necessarily have to have faith. Those kind of leaderships in those local churches had just lost the plot completely.

[20 : 58] When we get to 1 Timothy in a few weeks, we'll get to see the characteristics of the kind of leaders that God desires for his people. But remember, as we look at the darkness of these chapters, the opposite of them is where life in Christ can thrive.

So let's be quietly praying in our hearts, Lord, raise up the next generation of leaders in our fellowships who will love you deeply, who will walk faithfully before you, who will honour you, who will proclaim you in all your glorious fullness, but also for the leaders of this generation, the same. And ask, Lord, help us to see as you see. thirdly, they're sowing in idolatry, verses 4 to 8.

Verse 4, with silver and gold, they're making idols. Verse 5, it's really clear what Jesus, what the Lord expects of them. Just throw them out, get rid of them. Verse 6, he said, if you look at the bottom of the hooves of these idols of cows that you have, you'll see it's made in Israel.

It's not God's. And of course, we've said many times before, an idol is something that has a higher place or affection in our lives than God's.

[22 : 17] Something in our lives that you will not let God speak into because you know or you're fear, he would take it away and you just couldn't cope with that.

And it is in these verses that the proverb that we mentioned at the beginning and we're sort of framing our whole sermon on is that they sow the wind and they're reaping the whirlwind.

And another accompanying proverb, the stalk has no head, well, it will produce no flower. In other words, deed is seed which is multiplied in harvest.

Deed is seed which is multiplied in harvest. We reap what we sow, sow and sin and we reap sin's reward. So in chaos, we reap chaos's devastation. But the opposite of these words is where sweet life in Christ is to be found.

So let's stop and ask the Lord in our hearts to show us where we have the idols that we have made that are altars at which we bow down and help us to be rid of them.

[23 : 27] And for the church of God to be delivered from the idolatry of which there is many to which we can end up being duped.

Lord, help us to see as you see. Then fourthly, sowing ungodly alliances verses 9 to 11. We can read all about that again in 2 Kings 15.

The first thing that King Hosea did after he assassinated King Pekah was to make an alliance, jump into bed with Assyria, verse 9, give them tribute to make sure that he stayed king.

A decision made not in prayer but pragmatically for expediency and security rather than in faith and trust. He did it to survive but in the end actually ended up scattered as Assyria invaded Enoy.

And again, we remember that the opposite of these chapters is where abundant life in Christ is to be found. So let's stop and each of us in our hearts ask the Lord to show us in what ways have I made alliances in my heart for my security that our alliance is not with you because I'm not trusting you in that area.

[24 : 45] Help me, Lord, to trust you that you are good and your ways are good but also for the church and the land to keep faith and trust with the Lord in the higher throne and in the truth of his words to lead us and guide us.

Lord, help us to see as you see. And then fifthly and finally in this chapter they're sowing false altars verses 11 to 14 though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings they have become altars for sinning.

It's not here as we see that they were not attending church. They'd set up altars, yes, but they were not authorized by God. But everyone seemed to assume that they were.

Why is that? Because they didn't have their Bibles open when the preachers were preaching. and say, that is not what it says here. They didn't realize therefore that their leaders were basically making stuff up and ignoring large chunks of scripture.

And then in his word in this passage, I wrote them these laws that I wrote for them that many, the many things of my law but they regarded them as something foreign.

[26 : 01] You know the kind of things that would have been said in accompaniment to that. Oh, that's old school thinking. That was for then, not for now.

We know better now. That doesn't apply to me. I'm under grace. The kind of things that people say to get out of living God's good ways. Verse 13, though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me and though they eat the meat, the Lord is not pleased with it.

That's a horrendous thought, isn't it? That they think that they are worshipping God are right, God actually hates it. an offering of praise that is not acceptable to the Lord.

Well, Paul speaks into that in Romans 12, isn't it? And gives us a correction and says, this is the kind of sacrifice that the Lord is looking for. Romans 12, one, these familiar verses. Therefore, says Paul, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your truth. This is your proper worship. I'm not interested in just words, but lives given over to enjoying the grace and mercy that I've offered you and the new lives that I want to give you.

[27 : 21] Death to self, to live to Christ. That is what Paul is saying and he confirms it in the next verse, chapter two. So therefore, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed.

How? By the renewing of our minds as we reflect on the grace and the gospel and its implications.

Then we'll be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Be transformers, not robots in disguise. Be transformers, not conformers, Christians in compromise. and as we think about the future for ourselves as a fellowship, whatever that might look like if we continue to grow and that's not assumed, whether we have to go in the first instance to multiple services or multi-campus or plant a church or whatever it is.

Actually, what is our heart's desire? Is it simply for great services, great worship, you know, amazing buildings with the latest technology for building a reputation for ourselves?

[28 : 32] None of that, none of that. But that way we'd be a people of praise, faithful, Christ-like, humble, yet bold, loving, prayerful, generous, because ultimately we love the Lord.

We're not interested in buildings and all of that kind of stuff, but in Him and His glory and seeing others come to know Jesus. But they, verse 14, have forgotten the Lord, not in an intellectual sense but in a moral one and their future, sadly, because they're not repenting, is fire, not of blessing but of condemnation.

But the opposite of these chapters is where life in Christ is to abound. So let's stop and quietly ask the Lord in our hearts to help His church tear down, not put up false altars, preach a false gospel, give false offerings that lead to false living.

Instead, be, as Paul encourages us, be those living, sacrifice, holy and pleasing, acceptable to God, being transgressive, transformed, delighting in the gospel, not conforming to the pattern of those worlds.

Lord, help us to see as you see. So first of all, they sow the wind and then chapter 9, they reap the whirlwind and we see four facets of that.

[30 : 04] First of all, verses 1 to 5, we know there is punishment coming, there's a judgment coming. Some wonder if these verses, verses 1 to 5, we're kind of part of a sermon address at a harvest festival.

There is much that we can see, verse 1, jubilation at that time as the harvest is brought in. But the Lord is saying, stop, stop, you're being unfaithful.

faithful. In verse 3, exile is awaiting. In verse 4 and 5, and lament waits you there as in the place of exile.

And the backdrop to all of this and the sort of, in a sense, the sense of what was to come is there in many passages in Scripture like 2 Chronicles chapter 7. Solomon, in that passage, has dedicated the temple.

God reiterates his covenant of that relationship with his people of law and love. And you can read about it in 2 Chronicles 7, 17, if you want to turn to that. Where God says, as for you, and he's speaking to Solomon, but also to the people by implication, if you walk before me faithfully as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with David your father when I said you shall never fail to have a successor to rule over Israel.

[31:31] But, if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them.

And I will reject this temple, which I have consecrated for my name. I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among the peoples.

This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and say, why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple? And people will answer, because they have forsaken the Lord, the God of their ancestors who brought them out of Egypt and have embraced other gods worshipping and serving them.

that is why he brought all this disaster on them. But always, as these solemn words are said, there is the offer of mercy, isn't there, for those who will take it.

The familiar words of 2 Chronicles chapter 7, but verse 14, where he says, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their lands.

[33:02] But as we're reading in Hosea, they're not hearing that, though that offer is there on every single page, turn, turn to me. Their hearts are so hard, their consciences so seared that their ears have become deaf.

They're no longer believing the truth but believing their own truth. They have become, as we were learning two weeks ago, arrogant and insolent. Their sin has made them bird-brained, clueless as to the things of God.

And sadly, judgment is coming. And the proof of it is in verses 6 to 13 as God declares what will happen. That not only that the Assyrians will come to the south from the north but the Egyptians will come from the south and clear up anything that the Assyrians left behind.

And what is their response to all of this? Well, verse 7, this rejection of the word of God. They actually scorn it. The proclamations, the preaching, the prophecies of Hosea and his contemporaries, Amos and Isaiah.

Verse 7 of chapter 9. Because of their, your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person, a maniac.

[34:25] The word of God is spurned, just ignored, openly hostile to it. Bibles are left unopened, no wanting to even look at it.

It was the same in the days of Noah, laughed at him as he followed the Lord right until the days of the flood. Jeremiah, also similarly, he was called a maniac and requested to be put in, chained up and in stocks.

Jeremiah 29, Amos chapter 7. The people of Israel basically told him to go back to Judah, where you're from. We don't want to hear this word. Amos 7, 12 to 13.

Isaiah similarly, chapter 28, verses 9 to 10. They mock him. They're saying, oh, who is he trying to teach? Isn't it the children? Isn't it the babies?

Do this, do that. And the Hebrew, it's like, me, me, me, me, me, me. God just do this. God just do that. And declaring themselves to be mature.

[35:24] We know better. Keep that stuff for the kids in the Sunday Sabbath school. But we remember that the Lord Jesus, who is the word, made flesh.

The incarnate truth, this truth, made flesh, also was similarly despised. John chapter 8, verse 48. They said, oh, he's demon possessed.

He's a Samaritan. And it all sounds really negative, but here's the thing. While God is still speaking, there is still hope implicit in these judgments.

It's the call to turn, to repent, to change direction. As in, you know, 2 Chronicles 7, 14. This is the God's.

God's. Who in his wrath remembers mercy. Doesn't sweep things under the carpet kind of mercy. But one that is built on truth and justice in which there is real liberty, real freedom to be found.

[36:35] Hence the need for the cross and the power of the cross and the reality of the cross where wrath and mercy meet. and true liberty flows in Christ.

But they don't turn. They don't heed. They scorn. They mock. And so bring on all of themselves the unspeakable horrors of war at the hands of the merciless and brutal Assyrians, verses 11 to 13.

But in verse 14, Hosea tries to pray. How does this message affect the prophet?

Is he just detached from it? Well, no. You see, prayer just halted. He starts to pray in verse 14, Lord, give them, Lord.

Lord, and is he going to say, Lord, give them a spirit of repentance. Help open their eyes. But he stops and thinks, what will you give them? Then these words come from his lips that are to us strange and painful.

[37 : 47] Different times in attitudes to these things. But in essence, he is asking that the next generation would not be born so that they would not have to face what is coming. He is asking for mercy in a way.

Don't bring children into what is coming, Lord, have mercy. And actually, Jesus says something similar in Luke 23, 29. And then there is this final pronouncement in verses 15 to 17.

I barely have the heart to read these words, but here what we are seeing is that they are now being rejected by God. having willfully, ignorantly, persistently rejected him.

And all of this, it leaves us in a somber place, doesn't it? As we do see how he sees. And Paul picks up on that central idea of sowing and reaping in Galatians 6, verse 8.

He says, whoever sows to please their flesh, and he mentions what that means in Galatians, the previous chapter, Galatians 5, the acts of the sinful nature, the acts of the flesh are obvious, sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

[39 : 10] You reap these, you sow these things, and he says, from the flesh we will reap destruction. Galatians 6, 8. So where do we go with this?

Where do we go from here? Of course, the whole of the Old Testament is pointing forward, isn't it? It's calling out for the one who was to come who would be the faithful Israel, the better Jacob of covenant heads, from whom the people of God, a faithful people would come, born not of natural birth, but born of a spiritual one, born again by the Spirit.

The one who would be the true vine to which the people of the nations would be engrafted. The anointed and utterly trustworthy and godly king whose lead we would gladly take and under whose kingship we would prosper.

Chapters 8 and 9 are so stark to us, and they do leave us bereft because all that we cherish is just absent, leaning on the Lord, the adventure of faith and trusting Him, seeing Him to be all that He has promised to be.

He is our shield, our strong tower. I will be your rock in which you can stand. I will be the blessing and lover of your souls. I will lead you. I'll guide you. I'll keep you. I will hold you close to my heart and as the apple of my eye, I will shepherd you.

[40 : 39] I will love you and keep you secure in me. I will be your God and you will be my people. Those are the things utterly bereft in these chapters, aren't they?

As the people walk away from that blessing. Galatians chapter 6 verse 8, Paul continues, so whoever sows to please their flesh from the flesh will reap destruction, but whoever sows to please the Spirit, to please Him.

From the Spirit will reap eternal life. Today is Palm Sunday and in traditional Western Christian calendars, today is the day where we remember Jesus who in accord with Zacharias' prophecy rode on a donkey into Jerusalem that last time for one reason and for one reason alone. because He knew the truth and the reality of your and my situation. Our very great needs for Him to break sin's enchantment, its power and its punishment, to break religion's delusions, the devil and death's dominion, so that you and I, born of the Spirit, might live by the power of that Spirit in the love of the Father, saved by the Son for all eternity.

Because we in our lives before Christ, we were sowing the wind, weren't we? And He, whilst He in His life only ever sowed perfect obedience, went to the cross to reap the whirlwind of God's judgment in our place that we deserved because of what we had sown, so that we, who don't deserve these things, might sow to please the Spirit and wonder of wonders and joy of joys, reap eternal life.

[42 : 58] That is the joy, that is the wonder, that is the power of the cross and the gospel. That's why we look forward to Good Friday, to coming to the foot of the cross and remember all that He did for us.

That as we've looked through Hosea and as we've seen our sin, it highlights all the more, doesn't it, the glory of the cross and the wonder of what Jesus did for us.

Lord, help us to see Your great redemption purposes for our lives as You see them. Amen? Let's pray.

God our Father, we confess to being somewhat humbled and disturbed by these chapters as we see people just walking away from grace, walking away from blessing, walking away from all Your promises, walking away from Your precious presence.

Lord, we seek You, we long that You would help us and we need Your help because we are as tempted as much as they.

[44 : 16] Help us, Lord, to remain faithful. Lord, we believe, help our unbelief. help us to have our eyes fixed on Jesus and all the glory and the wonder of all that He wants to bring to us with Him as our King and carrying in the train of His robe all the blessings of heaven.

Lord, help us to gladly and joyfully fall in behind Him and declare Him, yes, Savior, hallelujah, but also, Lord, in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.