

The Realm of Blessing

Even as believers, there are things that we can do, that we must do, to remain in a realm of blessing so that the covenant promises of God can most efficiently reach us. That is the nature of covenant. Thankfully, it is the nature of a divine Father's love that He disciplines us in our rebellion, so as to bring us to our senses. In the days of Hosea, the covenant nation had cast off the restraints of God's law as they wandered far beyond the boundaries of where God could shelter, protect or bless them and still maintain the integrity of His own declarations:

¹³But you have planted wickedness,
 you have reaped evil,
 you have eaten the fruit of deception.
Because you have depended on your own strength
 and on your many warriors,
¹⁴the roar of battle will rise against your people,
 so that all your fortresses will be devastated ... - Hosea 10:13, 14a

There were times when Israel's military was so formidable that they forgot that *JEHOVAH Nissi* (the LORD our Banner) was the only reason they were ever truly safe from their enemies. They were a deceitful bunch that exploited one another whenever they could get away with it. The brotherhood of the nation had been severely undermined. Because they had planted wickedness, they reaped "evil", a word that comes from a root that means "a yoke". In other words, their own sins had taken them captive. They were slaves to their own fleshly passions. Now, while God would not bless them in their rebellion, His desire to extend His loving kindness to them had not changed, so He extended this offer as a remedy:

¹²Sow for yourselves righteousness,
 reap the fruit of unfailing love,
and break up your unplowed ground;
 for it is time to seek the LORD,
until he comes
 and showers righteousness on you. - Hosea 10:12

To "sow righteousness" meant that, among other things, they must recognize that they had been existing as a population of exploiters and victims rather than as a nation of brothers. It was time to treat one another right. In matters of national security, they were to trust the LORD. And, most significantly (because it was a key to all their good intentions), they were to break up their "unplowed ground". There may be a sorrowful desire to return to the realm of blessing, but that desire does not become repentance in a biblical sense until it begins to address worldly patterns, break worldly habits and purge worldly values.

The Word of God must be the agent of change that brings us back to Him. It is excellent seed. But, until a farmer plows deeply and breaks up the hardness of the earth, he has not done what he must do to expect an excellent harvest. Plowing is hard work just as breaking away from an old lifestyle is hard work, but it must be done.

In no way does this undermine the gospel of free grace. There are works by which a man believes that he can earn his salvation from God. Those efforts are like filthy rags in God's sight and are powerless to save us. But, there is work to be done that demonstrates that our repentance is genuine and not just some fleeting sentiment. No one can enjoy the covenant blessings of God unless he or she will engage himself or herself in that labor. Breaking up fallow ground and keeping it unbroken will remain the work of repentance until this world is gloriously remade for the children of God.

“What I am anxious to see in Christian believers is a beautiful paradox. I want to see in them the joy of finding God while at the same time they are blessedly pursuing Him. I want to see in them the great joy of having God yet always wanting Him.” - A.W. Tozer

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