

It is Time to Seek the Lord

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Ok. Let's turn back to Hosea chapter 10.

As I said, the title of this message this evening is this. "It is Time to Seek the Lord." And I want you to understand that this is a message from this prophet, this weeping prophet. I believe Hosea was just like Jeremiah in that way, that when he delivered this message all the way through the book of Hosea and this chapter 10, that he was as one writer said, like a skilful physician who keeps probing at the core of the problem, the core of the sickness, the core of Israel's sin which is self righteousness and unbelief and idolatry. But he doesn't keep probing at the core of these sins in order to gloat or to simply grind it in or to beat them down or to threaten them with the threatenings of the law, but to show them that there is no hope of salvation for any sinner apart from God's grace which could only be found in looking to his promise to send a Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to put away their sin and to show them that now is the time to seek the Lord.

He starts off with reminding them of their sad and sinful condition. Look at verses one and two. This is the sinful fruit of a divided heard.

It says, "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images."¹

That is idols, statues.

"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty,"² which literally means guilty, "he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images."³

"Israel is an empty vine."⁴

Some translations and you might... if you do study other translations you might find a different word there that is kind seems a little strange which says that Israel is a luxuriant vine, that it is bringing forth fruit which means if that was the case that it is emphasizing

¹ Hosea 10:1.

² Hosea 10:2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hosea 10:1.

that the good gifts of God that are given to Israel by God are used in a sinful way. Either way, here is the problem. He says it right here.

“He bringeth forth fruit unto himself.”⁵

And so whether they are flourishing or whether they are empty, it is fruit unto death, bringing forth fruit unto themselves. In other words, this is not fruit unto the glory of God. It is not fruit that drags them to God seeking mercy and grace in time of need. It is not to the praise of the glory of God’s grace. It is the fruit of sin that brings for idolatry. It is fruit unto death.

Look over at Romans chapter seven. The apostle Paul deals with this in his day when he speaks of Israel and his own experience under the religion of the Jews which had perverted the old covenant and turned it into a system of works salvation. And he says in Romans seven and verse four...

He talked... well, look at verse five.

He says, “For when we were in the flesh...”⁶

Now that is as a natural man.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them.”⁷

That is an unconverted, unregenerate, unbelieving man, when we were in the flesh. When I was an unbeliever, the motions or the passions of sins which were by the law, in other words, I was motivated within myself as I interpreted the law. He says, “did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”⁸

And it may have looked well on the outside and it may have looked good on the outside, but it was fruit unto death.

In order to bring forth fruit unto God we have got to be married to Christ.

Look at verse four. He says, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law,”⁹ which simply means that the law’s justice has been completely fulfilled and satisfied in your case and you don’t owe a debt to God’s law. That law has been paid. You are dead to the law. The law can no longer condemn you or bring you in guilty before God. You become dead to the law.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Romans 7:5.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

⁸ Romans 7:5.

⁹ Romans 7:4.

Now how did that happen? He says, “By the body of Christ,”¹⁰ by the sacrifice of Christ. The death of Christ on the cross was the believer’s death to the law. Thank God.

And he says, “That you should be married to another,”¹¹ that we might be united to Christ in faith, in love. And he says, “Even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”¹²

Now that is the difference between salvation and condemnation. That is the difference between being a child of God and a child of Satan. That is the difference between being born again by the Spirit and being unregenerate.

Israel back here, Hosea says, is an empty vine.

And, like I said, it may be flourishing in the eyes of men. It may be productive. It is like false religion. They may have multitudes following them. They may have a lot of money. They may have big buildings. They may have a lot of things that looks like they are flourishing. But it is really empty spiritually. There is no grace. There is no truth. There is no crimes. And so it says he “bringeth forth fruit unto himself.”¹³ It is for his own glory. It is for his own self fulfillment. It is not the praise of the glory of God’s grace.

And God’s purpose and work in salvation is to bring his people to repentance from this very thing.

The book of Hebrews chapter nine, I believe it is, calls it “repentance of dead works.”

Repent of this fruit unto death. Don’t relish in it. Don’t promote it.

Look at verse two again. He says, “Their heart is divided.”¹⁴ That is the abomination of the divided heart, divided loyalties. They enjoy the blessings of God but in ungodly ways. And he says they claim to worship and honor and glorify God but they love sin and they love self. And it is divided in a way, literally, what this word means is in smoothness and in flattery.

Now what does that mean? Well, the justify themselves and they promote sin in a... under the guise of religion.

Psalm 12 and verse two spoke of that. That is why I read that psalm at the beginning. It says, “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hosea 10:1.

¹⁴ Hosea 10:2.

¹⁵ Psalm 12:2.

They want smooth words. They don't want to hear the truth that would bring them to conviction of sin and depravity to show them their need of salvation by the sovereign mercy and grace of God. And the idea of Israel's smooth or insincere faithless heart here is reflected and it was pictured back in Hosea's marriage to Gomer.

Do you remember his wife Gomer? The same way that an unfaithful wife will say they love their husband all the while living a lie, it is the same way Israel's heart was toward God.

Somebody said it is like this. He said, "Their sweet smiles are lies and they are guilty."

But now God's prophets and God's preachers don't operate that way. Turn over to 1 Thessalonians chapter two with me. And this is the issue now. You know, is this the case now? Do you tell me what I want to hear or do you tell me what I need to hear? That is the issue. That is why it was said at the beginning when I quoted the commentator, he said, "Hosea is like a skillful physician, probing at the core of Israel's sin."

I mean, you would rather be told, I would rather be told that I am healthy and everything is fine and I am just the picture of health and everything. But if I am sick I need to hear something different.

But look here at 1 Thessalonians chapter two and verse one. Paul writes here to the Church at Thessalonica. He says:

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men...¹⁶

You see, that is what was going on in Israel.

...not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: For of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.¹⁷

You see, that is what God's preachers do. We are not here to use flattering words to honor men, to memorialize men. I thought about that when in preparing for Kitty's memorial service. The last thing that a child of God wants any preacher to do when we are saying our good byes to them, when they leave this life is to stand up here and brag

¹⁶ 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

¹⁷ 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6.

and boast on them. They want you who are living to hear of their Savior. They want you who are living to hear of their hope in Christ.

And so Hosea brings them to task back here in Hosea 10. He says, “Your heart is divided. You have divided loyalties.”

They are like those whose hearts have been hardened, grown hard, not hearts that know and love and trust Christ purified by faith, established with grace. This is the opposite of the true heart that Paul described in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 22 when he talked about a true heart in full assurance of faith. That true heart is an honest heart. That true heart is a heart that is being cleansed by the blood of Christ, cleansed by faith in him sprinkled from an evil conscience he said.

And then God says here in verse two, he says, “They are found guilty.”

Oh, I tell you. How can a sinner become not guilty before a holy God? There is not but one way and idolatry is not that way. He said he will break down their altars. He will spoil their images. These altars and images, false religion, idolatry cannot remove the guilt of sin, cannot remove the depravity of sin. Only Christ by the grace of God can remove the guilt and the depravity of sin.

And so listen to what they say. It says in verse three, “For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?”¹⁸

Now they had rejected God as their true king. They had rejected the line of David through whom the Messiah, the King of kings would come. They did that when they left Jerusalem. They left him when they left the temple. Why?

It says, “Because we feared not the LORD.”¹⁹

Now that is the state of all men and women by nature.

You know, when Paul described the natural man—and that is all of us, too, by nature without Christ, without God, without grace. In Romans chapter three when he said, “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”²⁰ One of the things that he said of us by nature is that there is no fear of God before our eyes, Romans chapter three and verse 18. No fear of God, no respect, no regard. And, therefore, they would not bow to God as King to God’s way.

They said, “What then should a king do [for] us?”²¹

¹⁸ Hosea 10:3.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Romans 3:10-11.

²¹ Hosea 10:3.

It reminds me of that parable that the Lord taught in Luke chapter 19 when the king sent his sons to deal with the rebellious people and it said his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

The Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Jews said the same thing when it was put upon the cross of our King, of our Lord and Savior, King of kings or the King of Israel. And they said, “We have no king but Caesar.”²²

And they didn’t really want to bow to Caesar.

“We have no king. What can God do for us?”

They will not submit to God as a sovereign Lord and king.

They will not submit to Christ. By nature none of us will. That is why Paul wrote in Romans chapter 10. He said, “They will not...” Israel, his heart’s desire and prayer for Israel is that they be saved, but they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God [in Christ].”²³

Look at verse four of Hosea 10. He says, “They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock [or poison] in the furrows of the field.”²⁴

They speak lies. They make promises they cannot or do not keep. And like a poisonous herb will destroy a whole field they destroy themselves with these lies.

He says in verse five, “The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven.”²⁵

Now you remember now the history of this now how Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom how he turned the people away from Jerusalem and he set up other places of worship such as Bethel and other places and that he turned Bethel into a place of idolatry. It is called Bethaven here. Bethel, that is the same place, Bethel means house of God. Bethaven means house of evil. And he put up the golden calf there. And it says... and that was another way of rejecting God’s king, God’s promise, God’s Messiah.

He said, “For the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.”²⁶

²² John 19:15.

²³ Romans 10:3.

²⁴ Hosea 10:4.

²⁵ Hosea 10:5.

²⁶ Ibid.

God is going to take all their pride and all their glory, all their hope away. It is going to be gone. Their refuge is going to be removed. Their peace is going to be overturned. It is going to be turned into shame and destruction.

Look at verse six.

How is God going to do it? He says, “It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb.”²⁷

Now you remember that King Jareb, how he was mentioned back in Hosea chapter five? There is no literal King Jareb. That was just a play on words describing the king of Assyria whose name was probably Shalmaneser. That was his real name. But it was King Jareb meaning the warrior king. One commentator said it was like a play on words like saying something like King Pick-a-fight or something like that. He was just ready to fight, ready to war.

And then he says, “Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.”²⁸

They are going to be ashamed of their own words.

Verse seven.

“As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam,”²⁹ or, literally, as a twig, “upon the water.”³⁰

I don’t know why some of the translators translate that foam, but, you know, foam on the ocean that comes in on the shore, it is gone. But literally this is a twig upon the water, just like a little twig in the ocean. It is gone. It is nothing. It has no significance whatsoever. It has no positive effect on its environment whatsoever. It is totally worthless.

And so he says in verse eight, “The high places also of Aven...”³¹ that is evil like Bethaven. “...the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars.”³² It is going to be overgrown with weeds. “And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.”³³

In other words, when Assyria comes down on them with God’s wrath, unknowingly being instruments of God’s wrath they are going to say, “It would be better for the mountains or the hills to fall on us and consume us.”

²⁷ Hosea 10:6.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hosea 10:7.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Hosea 10:8.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

So look at God's counsel to Israel.

Now when you read through this, this is God's counsel to us, too.

It says in verse nine, "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah."³⁴

Gibeah was mentioned back in Hosea chapter nine when that great sin in the book of Judges as recorded in Judges 19 took place where the Levite allowed his concubine to be raped and raped and raped and then he cut her up into 12 pieces and sent her all over the land. In other words, the picture back there is that they had become so calloused over these sins that they couldn't even recognize it.

So he says, "Your sin, you are no different today in your idolatry, in your religion, in your divided heart. You are no different today."

It says, "There they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them."³⁵

They couldn't fix it back then. They can't fix it today. Man cannot conquer sin. Man cannot conquer self. I don't care how new and improved we are in our society today, the problem is still the same. S I N.

And we cannot come up... man cannot come up with a cure from it in his science, in his economy, in his philosophy or in his religion. Isn't that right? You cannot do it. It will kill every one of us if left to ourselves.

And so he says in verse 10, he says, "It is in my desire that I should chastise them."³⁶

Here is what God is saying there. He is saying, "When I am ready in my time when I say so they will be punished," in God's time.

And he says, "And the people shall be gathered against them."³⁷

There is going to be a great multitude of people gathered against Israel.

"...when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows."³⁸

That literally is, "When they shall bind themselves in their two transgressions or their two habitations." In other words, where they try to hide themselves.

³⁴ Hosea 10:9.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Hosea 10:10.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

But what he is simply saying there is this. Wherever they try to hide themselves from God's wrath it is sinful. It is a transgression. Now why is that? Because the only refuge that God has for sin is turning unto Christ. You turn anywhere... and just think about it. Go back to the garden. When Adam and Eve fell and they realized in their shame their nakedness and their exposure to the wrath of God, where did they turn for refuge? They sewed fig leaf aprons together to try to hide themselves. And they tried to hide from God. That was transgression.

And that is what he is saying here. What is their two transgressions here in Israel? What is their idols? Their places of idol worship. And then they ran to the enemy. They tried to make alliances with the enemy, with Assyria, with Egypt, their two transgressions. God is going to remember them.

There is no refuge from the wrath of God, built Christ and him crucified and risen again.

So they rejected God and they turned to idols and wicked allies. They leaned upon their own understanding and leaned upon the flesh.

Look at verse 11.

It says, "nd Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught,"³⁹ or trained, "and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods."⁴⁰

That is a little strange, isn't it, that language there? What is he saying?

Well, that heifer that is trained is like one that is loose and is trained and it eats wherever it wants to, out in the pasture, out in the field, wherever it wants to go it eats. And what God is saying is, "I have allowed you to do that up to this point, but now I am going to bring a harness down upon your neck that is going to bare you to the ground and you are going to be an animal, a beast of burden because I am bringing this Assyrian army down upon you. You have been having your way up to this time and here is what you have done. You have transgressed. You have sinned. But now I am going to bring a yoke upon you and I am going to hold you back with that yoke. I am going to bare down on you and you are going to be ridden like a beast of burden and even Judah..."

He mentions Judah again. Now Hosea was mainly a prophet to the northern kingdom, but he did have some words for Judah, too. This is a warning for Judah. You are going to be in the same shape. You are going to plow, too.

"And Jacob shall break his clods."⁴¹

³⁹ Hosea 10:11.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Like out there just breaking hard, hard dry earth instead of free range, instead of freely eating here and here. You know, when it gets... when you eat up this pasture you go... no, you won't be able to do that anymore. God is going to bring it down upon you.

So what do you do? Where is there any hope here? All these words of judgment from this weeping prophet, this probing physician. What do we do? Well, here is the answer, verse 12. Here is the answer for them. Here is the answer for us today.

Now listen to this very carefully. He says, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."⁴²

Underscore that verse in your Bibles. Not only is that a prophecy, it is a promise. And not only is it a promise, it is a direction. It is a commandment from God. Not only is it symbolic language, it is gospel language. This is the language of grace.

First of all he says, "Seek ye the Lord." It is time to seek the Lord. Who is the Lord? He is Jehovah our Savior. He is the God of the covenant, the covenant that God made with Abraham, the covenant that God made with Moses and Israel on Sinai. He is the God of grace and mercy who justifies the ungodly. That is who you are to seek. Don't turn to Assyria. Don't turn to Egypt. Don't turn to your idols. Don't turn to yourself. Don't turn to your thoughts and your ideas and certainly don't turn to your works. Turn to the Lord, the Lord of glory, the Lord of promise who justified Abraham by promise of a coming Messiah, who established a system of sacrifice by which sinners would approach him on the basis of a blood atonement which pictured the one blood atonement which would come in time in their future, the Lamb of God slain on Calvary.

Seek the Lord.

Israel had sought their ways, their thoughts, their ideas, their self fulfillment, even to satisfy their fleshly appetites, but they had failed to seek the Lord.

Seek the Lord.

The Bible tells us that men by nature will not seek the Lord. Do you know the Scripture tells us that? None of us by nature of our own wills will seek the Lord.

Scripture says in Romans 3:10 and 1:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.⁴³

Is that what it says? That is the state of all men and women by nature.

⁴² Hosea 10:12.

⁴³ Romans 3:10-11.

Now many people don't believe that. Do you know that? Many people don't believe that. They believe that they do it of their own free will because they have a better will than other sinners. And here is how they would have to read it.

Now if you don't agree with this let me tell you how to read this verse. You have to add to it. Of course, the Scripture says, "Don't add to it." But here is how you would have to read it.

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one, except me."

"As it is written, There is none that understandeth, oh, except me."

Or "There is none that seeketh after God, except me."

Now is that the way you want to read the Scriptures?

No. I hope not. Because it is just not right. This is just a statement of fact. This is the state of all men and women by nature. If any of us seek the Lord, let me tell you what it is. It is a miracle of God's grace and power and goodness in Christ.

And so it says here none seek the Lord. And yet we are told in the Bible... listen to Hebrews 11 verse six.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him."⁴⁴

Now faith there in Hebrews 11 is simply looking to and resting in Christ for all salvation, for all righteousness, for all life, for all glory.

And then it says, "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."⁴⁵

That is what it says there.

And then we are commanded to seek him. Oh, we read it in the opening of our service tonight, Isaiah 55 and verse six. It says... this is a command now. This is an imperative. This is not an option.

It says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."⁴⁶

"For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel..."⁴⁷ This is a prophecy of Amos.
"Seek ye me, and ye shall live."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Hebrews 11:6.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 55:6.

⁴⁷ Amos 5:4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

“Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger.”⁴⁹

Our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew six and verse 33, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things,”⁵⁰ the things of this life that we need, the necessities, “shall be added unto you.”⁵¹

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 27 and verse four, listen to this. He said, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”⁵²

That will I seek after.

Now the world cannot understand this. That is why they said back here in Hosea chapter nine that the prophet is a fool and the believer is a mad man, insane.

So what are we to do?

Well, over there in Psalm 27 and verse eight the Lord tells us as the psalmist relates here.

“When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.”⁵³

Now what is your heart telling you tonight? What is my heart telling me tonight? If my heart tells me, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek,” then I can know from God’s testimony that the Lord has sought me and found me, that he has visited me. He has visited me. And he didn’t tell anybody.

Listen. Somebody says, “Well, if what you are saying is true if I seek him I may not find him.”

Well, listen to his Word again. Let’s read God’s Word. I could argue with you. I could debate with you. I could reason with you. Let’s just read a verse out of God’s Word. This is Isaiah 45 and verse 19.

Now listen to what the Lord says. He said, “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Zephaniah 2:3.

⁵⁰ Matthew 6:33.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Psalm 27:4.

⁵³ Psalm 27:8.

⁵⁴ Isaiah 45:19.

He never commanded or told anybody to seek him in vain. He never said, “Seek me, you may not find me. You may or you may not.” No, sir. He says, “Seek me and you will find me.” He said, “Ask, knock, seek. Ask and it will be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it shall be opened.”

Well, what is the problem then? Well, by nature and in our own way and in our own thoughts and in our ideas and from our own deceptive hearts we don't know how to seek the Lord. Did you know that?

Well, he tells us how right here in verse 12 of Hosea chapter 10. He tells you how to seek him. Listen to what he says in verse 12.

First of all here is number one. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground.”⁵⁵

What does that mean when he says, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness”?⁵⁶

Well, does that mean I am to go out and try to establish a righteousness of my own, to try to make myself righteous by my works, to try to do the best I can to earn and deserve God's favor and God's blessing? Is that what that means? Well, if that is what it means, Israel would have found it.

Let me show you that. Turn to Romans chapter nine. We have seen this before. But Israel didn't find. And why didn't they find? They were seeking something. They would probably have told you if you had asked them what they were doing they would have probably said, “We are sowing to righteousness.”

But look at verse 31 of Romans nine.

It says, “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? [Why?] Because they sought it not by faith.”⁵⁷

That “sought” was added by the translators, but it is a good addition. How did they seek it? How did they seek righteousness?

“...not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law,”⁵⁸ by their works. They were trying to be righteous. They would have said, “We are sowing to righteousness.” But how? By their works.

“[And] they stumbled at the stumblingstone.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Hosea 10:12.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Romans 9:31-32.

⁵⁸ Romans 9:32.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Now what is the stumblingstone? Well, that is a prophecy that identifies something. You will find it back in the book of Isaiah chapter eight and chapter 28, this stumblingstone. And it says in verse 33 as he quotes from Isaiah 28, he says, “As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion...”⁶⁰

Zion, that is that symbol of the Church, isn't it?

“...a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him,” that stumbling stone is a person, “...shall not be ashamed.”⁶¹

That is Christ.

What is it to seek righteousness by faith? It is to seek it in Christ and find it in Christ. You seek it in works. You won't find it. And that is what he says down here in Romans 10 and verse four.

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”⁶²

Go back to Hosea 10:12. What is it to sow to yourselves in righteousness, to reap in mercy, to break up your fallow ground? That fallow ground, that is the hard, unplowed ground of our natural hearts. It is the stony heart. That is what that fallow ground is.

Christ described it in Matthew 13 and verse 15.

“For this people's heart is waxed gross.”⁶³ That means it has grown hard. “And their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”⁶⁴

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness.”⁶⁵

Does that mean seek righteousness in the law? No. Why was the law given?

“The law entered, that the offence might abound.”⁶⁶ Romans 5:20.

The law was given to bring sinners in guilty before God to know that, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”⁶⁷ Romans chapter three 19 through 20.

⁶⁰ Romans 9:33.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Romans 10:4.

⁶³ Matthew 13:15.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Hosea 10:12.

⁶⁶ Romans 5:20.

⁶⁷ Romans 3:20.

The law was added because of transgressions till the seed, somebody, should come to whom the promise was made, Galatians 3:19. That seed was Christ.

The law was a schoolmaster, a tutor to lead them to Christ. The law was never given as a way or a means of righteousness by men's works. It was given because of sin.

What is it to sow to yourselves in righteousness, to reap in mercy, to break up your fallow ground? It is to come to God. Seek him as you really are a sinner in need of mercy. God be merciful to me the sinner. That is an example of sowing to righteousness, reaping in mercy and breaking up the fallow ground.

There is not but one who can break up that fallow ground and that is God the Holy Spirit in true conviction. That is why God says, "I will take away the stony heart and give unto them a heart that is pliable."

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness."⁶⁸

And then here is the second thing. He says, "For it is time to seek the LORD, till he come."⁶⁹

That is future, now, something in the future. In other words, we are looking for something to come, someone to come in the future and what is it?

"...and rain righteousness upon you."⁷⁰

Where does rain fall from? From the heavens.

So where are you going to look for it? Where are you going to seek the Lord and find righteousness? From the heavens. God is going to send it. He is going to rain it on us from the heavens. What is that talking about? It is talking about what the psalmist spoke of in Psalm 72 and verse six.

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth."⁷¹

Talking about the coming of Christ, the Messiah.

2 Samuel 23 and verse four. "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."⁷²

⁶⁸ Hosea 10:12.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ psalm 72:6.

⁷² 2 Samuel 23:4.

That is Christ.

What is it to seek the Lord? It is to seek him as we are, not as we think we are, not as we try to be, but as we are, sinners in need of mercy, sinners who have nothing to recommend us to God, sinners who have no righteousness and cannot make ourselves righteous before God. It is to seek him in his Word. It is to seek him in and by the Lord Jesus Christ who is our righteousness.

And here is what God says. Look at verse 13. Here is his judgment for their sin and idolatry.

He says, “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity.”⁷³

That is why we need to sow unto ourselves in righteousness and reap in mercy. We need mercy from God. Don’t plow wickedness, because if you do you will reap iniquity. What you sow, so shall ye reap.

“Ye have eaten the fruit of lies.”⁷⁴

You have listened to these false preachers.

“...because thou didst trust in thy way...”⁷⁵

That is the problem right there. Man trusts in his own way and not in God’s way.

Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁷⁶

“... in the multitude of thy mighty men.”⁷⁷

Men trying to be saved by their own power, their own goodness.

He says in verse 14, “Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses [every hiding place you have] shall be spoiled, as Shalman...”⁷⁸ That is probably Shalmaneser the King of Assyria, “...spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle.”

We really don’t know where this Betharbel is, but what it indicates here is this is a place that Shalmaneser the King of Assyria utterly destroyed.

⁷³ Hosea 10:13.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ John 14:6.

⁷⁷ Hosea 10:13.

⁷⁸ Hosea 10:14.

And what he is saying here he says, “That is the same way you are going to be destroyed.”

And he says, “The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.”⁷⁹

That is how bad it was, killing mothers with child.

And he says in verse 15, “So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness.”⁸⁰

You have turned Bethel, the house of God, into Bethaven with your idolatry. And he says that is how it is going to happen.

“In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.”

Well, let me conclude this way. I have been thinking about this a lot. For me, for you, for all of us and that is this. Now listen to me. I have got a profound thought here for all of us. You all know me. It is time to seek the Lord. And, you know, we think about lost sinners and preaching the gospel to them. That is certainly the way it is, evangelism. They need to hear the good news and they need to seek the Lord. But you believers this preacher right here, you know, right now it is time for me and for you to seek the Lord. I know we have got other things to do. We have got other places to be. We have got other things occupying our minds and our time and all the... it is time right now to seek the Lord.

And, you know, we may have grown much in grace and in knowledge of Christ and I hope we have. I hope we continue to do so. But we will never grow beyond our present need to seek the Lord right now. Seek him in his Word.

You may be thinking, “Well, I need some things. I need to do some things. I need to get some things.”

There is nothing you need. There is nothing I need more right now than to seek the Lord, especially in our day and age. This old world is winding down. And I am going to be preaching a lot on that on the next few Sunday mornings. It is winding down. I am not trying to tell you I know when the world is going to come to an end, when the Lord is coming back. I don't know, but I know that he is. This old thing is winding down. And if it... if he doesn't come back in my lifetime I know I am winding down.

It is time to seek the Lord. And if you don't have the time to seek the Lord, you had better make the time to seek the Lord.

⁷⁹ Hosea 10:14.

⁸⁰ Hosea 10:15.

That is Hosea's message to Israel. And they didn't. They didn't listen. And, oh, that the Lord by his grace would cause each and every one of us to listen and to heed what he says.

All right.