

Why Doesn't the Lord Give Up on His People?

[Hosea 11:8-12](#)

Hosea, Day 21

*How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not a man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.*

*They shall go after the Lord;
he will roar like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come trembling from the west;
they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of Assyria,
and I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord.
Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,
and the house of Israel with deceit,
but Judah still walks with God
and is faithful to the Holy One.*

- Hosea 11:8-12, ESV

After several chapters of stinging indictment and stunning judgment, God pulls back suddenly in Hosea 11 and asks:

*How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?*

*My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;*

If you've been reading along and taking the previous chapters seriously, you might want to ask, "Why??" We've seen clearly how much Israel deserves condemnation. We've seen how utterly unfaithful, ungrateful, immoral, and unrepentant Israel had been and continued to be. Why not simply wipe them off the map and start again with someone else?

The living demonstration God gives in the opening chapters of His relationship with Israel only serves to drive the point home: Gomer is a serial adulteress, bearing children with other men, running away from Hosea, and ending up for sale at a local slave market. Honestly, if you were Hosea's friend and he came to you for advice, what would you tell him to do? Wouldn't you say, "Hosea, buddy come on, man. Let her go. She was never

faithful to you and she'll never be faithful to you. She put herself in this mess. She deserves it."? I'm pretty sure I would say something like that if I had a friend in Hosea's position.

But, as God says, in verse 9 - "*I am God and not a man*" - God is not like us. When God sets His heart on someone and chooses them to be His own in love, His love does not change. His love remains steadfast and strong, stronger than death. And so God will not utterly destroy His people.

But how can He not? How can He spare such a wicked, idolatrous, immoral people and remain a just and holy God. He will not abandon His love for His people, but neither will He abandon His holiness. So, how can He save a wicked people? Well, verse 10 tells us it will happen "*when He roars.*"

Because I love *The Chronicles of Narnia*, verse 10 is one of my favorite verses in Hosea. I can just picture the risen and triumphant Aslan roaring and summoning His troops for battle against the White Witch. I'm sure C.S. Lewis must have been inspired by Hosea 11:10 when he wrote this wonderful scene for *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

But when did God roar? When did His children come repentant and returning to Him? Like every other good promise in the Old Testament, I think Hosea 11:10 is pointing to Christ. Jesus said, "*I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" (John 12:32, ESV) Jesus was talking about His death on the cross.

When Jesus came, He demonstrated the love of God by pursuing His own. His engagement with the Samaritans, many of whom became believers in Jesus, was His fulfillment of today's passage. Ultimately, His loving pursuit of His people led Him to the cross, where God's justice and holiness could be satisfied, the sins of God's people washed away, and God's love set free to draw all of His chosen ones to Himself.

On the cross, God roared, sin died, justice was satisfied, and love was set free. So, why doesn't the Lord give up on His people? Because He loves us, and unlike man, His love never changes. And how can God be right and just in never giving up on us? Because of the full redemption price paid for us on the cross. Praise the Lord for such perfect justice and unfailing love!