

How Should We Respond When God Takes Away Our Idols?

[Hosea 10](#)

Hosea, Day 19

Israel is a luxuriant vine
that yields its fruit.
The more his fruit increased,
the more altars he built;
as his country improved,
he improved his pillars.
Their heart is false;
now they must bear their guilt.
The Lord will break down their altars
and destroy their pillars.

For now they will say:
“We have no king,
for we do not fear the Lord;
and a king—what could he do for us?”
They utter mere words;
with empty oaths they make covenants;
so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds
in the furrows of the field.
The inhabitants of Samaria tremble
for the calf of Beth-aven.
Its people mourn for it, and so do its idolatrous priests—
those who rejoiced over it and over its glory—
for it has departed from them.
The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria
as tribute to the great king.
Ephraim shall be put to shame,
and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol.

Samaria's king shall perish
like a twig on the face of the waters.
The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel,
shall be destroyed.
Thorn and thistle shall grow up
on their altars,
and they shall say to the mountains, “Cover us,”
and to the hills, “Fall on us.”

Ephraim was a trained calf
that loved to thresh,
and I spared her fair neck;
but I will put Ephraim to the yoke;
Judah must plow;
Jacob must harrow for himself.
Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;

*break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the Lord,
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

- Hosea 10:1-8, 11-12, ESV

D.L. Moody famously said, "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible." And while I'm not sure I agree 100% with that statement, it does express an important truth, which I might put this way: If you belong to God and you give your heart to idols, you will find that your idols will draw your heart away from the Lord, or else the Lord, in love, will take away your idols.

So, if the Lord loves you, He will take away your idols, if you don't repent and surrender them first. Now, having the Lord take away your idols is a painful process. Hosea 10 describes it in graphic detail. A deeply rooted, dearly cherished idol is not one we give up easily. And when God takes it away, it disrupts and upends our entire lives.

Think about it: If your career is your idol, so that you find your self-worth and identity in your job and salary, you can either repent and submit your career to the Lord, or He may lovingly take it away from you. That would not be easy. Yet God has had to do that for His people again and again, and it is something He does in love. Nothing can take His place in our hearts and lives without disastrous consequences.

How should we respond if we see God taking away our idols? Israel responded by wailing for their idols and rejecting the Lord as their ruler. That was not a good response. It certainly did not help their situation any.

Instead, God told Israel what they should do, and it's the same word we need to hear:

*Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the Lord,
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

The New Testament uses slightly different language to communicate the same truth to the church:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. - Galatians 6:7-9, ESV

So, when God takes away our idols, we need to realize that we've been sowing to our flesh and we have been reaping corruption. We need to start sowing to the Spirit instead. That is, we need to start sowing righteousness. What does that mean? Hosea unpacks it: Break up the fallow ground and seek the Lord.

I'll put it another way: If God strips our idols from us, we can either cling to our idols or we can begin to cling to the Lord. We can either bemoan the loss of our idol, or we can thank the Lord for loving us enough to take away something we were unable to give up. We can turn to Him in thankful praise, knowing that the loss of our idol was His act of love for us.

The Lord loves you too much to leave you alone in the grip of your self-destructive idol. And that's wonderful good news, even when it hurts.