



WHEN Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. 2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. 4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me. 5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. 6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. 7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: 8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. 9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. 10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? 11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. 12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid. 13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. 14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. 15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. 16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up. (Hosea 13:1-16)

We observe three phases of Ephraim (Israel) in today's text:

1. The loss of glory under their previous fellowship with God (verse 1-4);
2. God's anger at their lack of charity and kindness (verses 5-8); and 3)
3. The reminder of God's Promise held in abeyance for Israel. (vs 9-16)

Loss of a Glorious Legacy

Ephraim/Israel enjoyed a stately and holy favor in the eyes of God as long as he lived and worshipped in a Holy fear of the Lord. But when he forsook the God of his youth in following false gods of comfort, wealth, and idolatry, he sank into the mire reserved for the worst of pagan nations. God does not share His Glory with another, either then, or now. In the ancient annals of Israel and Judah, these two were favored by God with a particular deference as long as they kept in remembrance all His blessings and benefits; however, when these sentiments and devotions lapsed, they became divided in soul, spirit, and national unity.

Ephraim/Israel is not alone in this spirit of apostasy. Please observe the beautiful land called America – *“Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim’s pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.”* Observe the extraordinary protections and material blessings with which God has blessed this favored land of His free grant to a liberty-loving people. It was populated by men and women serious about their faith in God. People willing to cast their last treasure upon the altar of liberty and conscience free of the tyrant’s boot – even unto death! What has happened to that nation of enterprising folk who only sought their livelihood at the hands of their own toil? What happened to those folk who cherished their faith so much that they were willing to risk the then-hazardous swells of the sea to enter into that haven of liberty? What happened to the nation in whose schools each day were sung the inspiring lyrics of that patriotic and Godly song whose words are included at its benediction?

Our father's God to, Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, our King!

That nation has followed in the path of Ephraim/Israel in worshipping other gods. We have become infatuated with an unholy view of sex, of an unnatural fixation on sports, on wealth and material things without regard to honor or justice. We are fallen and decadent. I know these words will pain the patriot (yes, we still have men and women of patriotic fervor), whose desire to see the beautiful land restored as much as I do. But the truth trumps sentiment and desire. Look at us! We are culturally balkanized whereas in the past all who came here assimilated to the fire and spirit of freedom and holiness.

Though we may learn the hard way the error of our ways, we shall nonetheless learn of it. God is kind and gentle to those who love Him and cherish His Word; but He is a raging fire to those who trample underfoot His Holy counsel. Consider the unchanging counsel given to Israel and know that the application of it applies to all nations who transgress as well as our beloved land: *“Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.”* When Israel became swelled with pride and riches, they always forsook the God who gave them such wealth and blessing. Today, America is living on more than the credit of an out-of-control

national debt – we are living on the borrowed blessings of our Fore Fathers. These will be removed in a fortnight unless we repent, and that right quickly.

As did Israel, we have lost the virtues of compassion and true love. We have re-translated those virtues into something shameful and dirty. This did Israel who paid by a permanent expulsion from the land.

Our sons and daughters, like Israel of our text, have become rebellious and disorderly. The very dress of many of our youth, and even adults, evidence a strong disrespect for others. The language heard in common places of public gathering is so coarse and profane that the offenders would have been arrested only fifty years ago.

Though self-destruction of a great nation is not such an insurmountable undertaking, saving such a nation is not in the power of man's hand. Only God can save and restore. When our people invent wicked practices unmentionable only a few decades ago, God will often allow them free rein, and end them delusions. *"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12)

Do you believe the world has already witnessed the greatest of all atrocities in such men as Tamerlane (Timur), Saddam Hussein, Hitler, Mao, or Stalin? If you believe these were ruthless and cruel, you have not seen anything yet until that Wicked One be exalted. He is already attempting to rebuild the Tower of Babel as the Global One World Government. Any mention of our Lord Jesus Christ is being denounced more and more with each passing day. Why do you believe this is happening? It is because the people of God have forgotten their backbones and from whence they have come. My old friend, Matthew Henry, describes these days in the following way: *"Woes, more terrible than any from the most cruel warfare, shall fall on those who rebel against God. From such miseries, and from sin, the cause of them, may the Lord deliver us."*

I pray that sentiment with Henry with this one exception: If such terrible miseries, pain, and suffering for our sins will restore us to a strong faith in our Maker, I say, "**Bring it on!!**"