**“God’s Loyal Love: Return, Observe, Wait”**

Hosea 11:12-12:14 Key Verse: Hosea 12:6

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 3/7/21)

 Let’s start today by singing the wonderful hymn on the back of this study. Do you really believe those words? It’s an awkward situation when you realize your life is not really totally consecrated to God. So, what do you do when you realize you have wandered from Him? Is there a way back? Hosea 12:6 is God’s “good medicine” for us backsliders.

 Hosea is the darkest chapter of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. A people once set apart to love God were just going through the motions. A people once set apart to love others were just loving themselves. Their appetites were self-centered and couldn’t sustain them. They were just “feeding on wind.” (Hosea 12:1) They were a people full of self-worship, self-gratification, and were totally self-absorbed. Is there a warning for us? The backslidden heart craves earthly things, but NOT God Himself. The backslidden heart is often “churchy” or “religious”, but mostly it’s self-preoccupied. The backslidden heart blindly pursues its own ruin. Read the warning to the Laodiceans in Rev. 3:15-22. What can we learn from these self-satisfied posers? (Q1)

 Hosea 12:2 and 12:14 warn that you’ll get what you’re due. Is judgment and wrath certain? Is there any hope? Don’t give up yet. Take a look back at Jacob (Hosea 12:3) and see what we can learn. Jacob was by nature a deceiver. He was a schemer, trying to steal his brother’s birthright. Can God use a self-centered, self-absorbed man like that? Jacob finally came to a point of crisis: Esau was coming for him, along with 400 fighters. Jacob had never lived by faith until God broke him. Read Gen. 32:26-30. How do you prevail with God? You cling to Him, even though you were broken by Him. (Q2) You must believe that He will extend mercy to someone as self-absorbed and sinful as you.

 Hosea 12:14 talks about “bloodguilt.” This means that sin deserves capital punishment. It’s what we deserve. Only Jesus can take the bloodguilt for all repentant backsliders. Don’t think that your sin goes unpunished: the gospel proclaims that Jesus took it upon Himself. His shed blood rescues you from the wrath you deserve. The gospel is the expression of God’s loyal love for His people. In Christ, our bloodguilt is not held against us. Jesus restores us as we return to Him.

 Look carefully at today’s key verse, Hosea 12:6. You are God’s and it’s time to start living that way. No one else can bring you back to God. It’s all between you and God. God eagerly calls His backslidden people back to Himself. That word “return” means “repentance.” The backslidden heart must return (repent, lose its original nature, take on a new nature). The repentant heart must give up allegiance to self and declare allegiance to Christ.

 Hosea 12:6 also calls us to observe mercy (lovingkindness). The repentant heart observes (actively keeps watch over) its loyal love toward God. **YOU DON’T HAVE TO PLAN TO STRAY FROM GOD; YOU JUST HAVE TO FAIL TO PLAN TO STAY CLOSE TO HIM**. (Q3) Hosea 12:6 also calls us to justice, living the right way, free from deception and bias, committed to doing what is right, moral, and godly. The repentant heart commits to treating others rightly. One more thing: we are called to wait. But waiting is so hard for a people used to instant gratification! Waiting on the Lord does NOT mean to do nothing. We should go to Him and say, “I am your ambassador. What do you want me to do for You today? Repentant hearts wait on the Lord. They serve Him and obey Him in the circumstances He has placed them. (Q4)

 The message of Hosea is this: No matter how dark and backslidden your life has become, God provides a way back through Jesus. Is your heart melting? Repent and turn to Christ.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. What can we learn from this message to the Laodiceans?
2. What does it mean to cling to God?
3. Backsliding is so easy to do. Believe me, I know. Together, come up with a plan to stay close to Him.
4. Look around at where God has placed you. Who has God called you to love? Who has God called you to encourage? Who has God called you to serve? Who has God called you to share the Gospel with? Share at least one name with your group, and then follow through.
5. What would be in these messages? Who would they be for?

 “Take My Life and Let it Be” (Havergal)

1. Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise. (repeat)
2. Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee. (repeat)
3. Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee. (repeat) (Q5)
4. Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne. (repeat)
5. Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee. (repeat)