

How Do You Know You're Not a Lost Cause? Small Group Follow-up Study for Hosea 11:12—12:14

RE-READ

[11:12] 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. [12:1] Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

[2] The LORD has an indictment against Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; he will repay him according to his deeds. [3] In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. [4] He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel, and there God spoke with us—[5] the LORD, the God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial name: [6] “So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.”

[7] A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. [8] Ephraim has said, “Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.” [9] I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast.

[10] I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables. [11] If there is iniquity in Gilead, they shall surely come to nothing: in Gilgal they sacrifice bulls; their altars also are like stone heaps on the furrows of the field. [12] Jacob fled to the land of Aram; there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep. [13] By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded. [14] Ephraim has given bitter provocation; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds.

RECAP

“Take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God” so said the author of Hebrews to his first century Jewish Christian audience in Hebrews 3:12. He said this after quoting from Psalm 95: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” How do we harden our hearts? We do so by listening to sin’s lies. Indwelling sin looks to deceive us. And so, the author of Hebrews says that we must “exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of [us might] be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” If I recognize this, if I recognize that I need daily exhortation, that my heart is prone to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and that that hardening can lead me ultimately to fall away from the living God, then I need to know have I gone over the line already? Am I a lost cause? How do you know if you’re not a lost cause? What does it look like to pass beyond the point of recovery? It looks like Ephraim; Ephraim refused to admit to her sin and refused, as well, to listen to her prophets (vv. 7-14). On the other hand, Judah, in our text, is seen to be standing on the brink of decision with the LORD calling her to repent, to hold fast to love and justice, and to wait continually for him (vv. 2-6). How do you respond to God’s word and to his prophets’ calls to repent of your sin?

RESPOND

1. What caught your attention from Sunday’s sermon? What are you still thinking about/mulling over? What questions did Sunday’s sermon raise in your mind that you would like to discuss?
2. Why, if daily exhortation is so necessary to keep us from becoming hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, do we resist it so? Why do we let other things get in the way of getting together with God’s people? What can be done to reverse this tendency?
3. Do you tend to listen to your prophets or to your profits? What is the result of listening to each? What effect do you think verse 13 is meant to have upon us as we read this text?
4. How can we work to cultivate a repentant spirit in our own hearts and how can we help one another receive reproof/exhortation well so that they will be more apt to respond in repentance as well?
5. What does it mean here for us to wait continually for God (v. 6)?
6. Given our conversation tonight, what should we be praying for ourselves and for our church?