

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Lesson 18, Chapter 10 Continued

As challenging as is the Book of Hosea to decipher, for several reasons I've already explained in depth, there is an overriding decision that teacher and student must make when attempting to plumb its depths: is this to be taken only as a historical matter of interest, concerning an ancient people, that adds to our Bible knowledge? Or, does it speak to every generation of those who claim Yehoveh as their God, such that it can and ought to be applied to our current, modern lives?

There is but a short distance between allegory and application when it comes to teaching; yet, the distance between the two is distinct and important. Allegory means to take a story, or a fable, or an event, and use it to extract a meaning or symbol that is useful in communicating a related idea to another person. Application means to take what is inherent within the written or spoken word as an instruction concerning our proper thought and behavior; it is something that requires obedience and action when a similar circumstance occurs. While allegory has its place in Bible study and Bible exegesis, that place should be quite limited as the exception and not the rule (unfortunately the exception has become the rule over the last few centuries within Christianity). Application, on the other hand, probably ought to be the expected goal and outcome of Bible study, otherwise such study results mostly in newfound head knowledge that essentially lays dormant, used only for theological discussion and debate.

Therefore, it is my estimation that Hosea's most useful purpose for Believers is less as a historical record and more as a cautionary tale full of divine instruction and revelation that is meant to be learned, taken seriously, and followed by every generation of those who call the God of Israel our God. So, today, I intend to draw application into our study so that indeed the meaning of these Scripture passages can be assimilated for our use, and not merely to fill up our reservoir of curiosity and knowledge.

The first 8 verses of Hosea chapter 10 go into some detail about God's determination to destroy Israel's fraudulent religious system and alongside it, their government, which has been, since the time of Saul, a monarchy. Yehoveh,

through the continuing agency of The Word, reminds Israel of their history, of what these kings have done, that it was never God's idea in the first place for Israel to have an earthly king, and reveals what is about to happen to them as a nation as a result of their determined wickedness that they attempted to set before Yehoveh as faithfulness. Back in chapter 8, God told them that they had given up true worship and understanding of Him as found in His written word (the Torah), and instead had adopted pleasing manmade rules and made them into doctrines. The point being that what they thought was sincere and proper behavior, morality, and worship was in fact wrong and they were deceived. Even though Israel had not overtly decided to do what was evil in God's eyes, by ignoring His commands and replacing them with their own ideas of justice, mercy, and obedience they indeed had done evil... terrible evil...that demanded a just response from Him.

So here is the application: Believers in Jesus as the Son of God...our Lord and Master... unless you know the Torah and obey it (and you can't obey something you don't know), you have placed yourselves into the same untenable position before God, adopting the same deceived mindset, as had Ephraim/Israel. Our sincerity, kindness, charity, justice, worship, and attempts to be at peace with everyone are not only useless to God, it is offensive to Him... **if** our standard for all these virtues and activities is something other than His Holy Scriptures, beginning with the Torah. When, in the 4th century, the Torah was officially removed from the Christian faith as our source of moral instruction and divine direction, it was as if the needle were removed from our moral compasses. Now, according to the doctrines of the Church, everyone had their own individual "north". What had been an objective set of divine ordinances and laws complete with application was legislated into oblivion by Church leadership and replaced with a subjective set of human traditions, established by councils of men, that could (and would) morph with time and sufficient allegorical teaching into an endless array of possibilities and beliefs.

It is my conviction that John the Revelator took his cue for describing the unfaithful of the End Times as the Whore of Babylon from the writings of Hosea, and probably mostly from faithful Hosea's relationship with unfaithful Gomer who had turned herself, by her own will, into an adulterating whore. This actual historical story of Gomer was then used to metaphorically characterize

Ephraim/Israel as an adulterating whore in the sense of unfaithfulness to God, which He calls idolatry. Sadly, much of Judeo-Christianity has followed suit by doing exactly the same thing: creating a hybridized religion that mixes manmade tradition with Bible truth, giving us a noxious brew of deception, and yet with both ancient and modern religious institutions loudly proclaiming our innocence and righteousness based not upon God's timeless written standards, but rather upon our own newly fashioned (and ever-evolving) standards. This deception is going to result in the gravest of consequences for countless individuals who are certain they are pleasing the Lord, but this certainty comes mostly from belonging to a group that agrees with them. Here is what God says to those of us who find ourselves in such a predicament:

CJB Revelation 18:1-4 *After these things, I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, the earth was lit up by his splendor. ² He cried out in a strong voice, "She has fallen! She has fallen! Bavel the Great! She has become a home for demons, a prison for every unclean spirit, a prison for every unclean, hated bird. ³ "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of God's fury caused by her whoring- yes, the kings of the earth went whoring with her, and from her unrestrained love of luxury the world's businessmen have grown rich." ⁴ Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues...*

God doesn't so much see the world...pagans...non-Believers... as "whores" because the term biblically refers to someone who claims allegiance and exclusive faithfulness to a partner or to their sovereign, but instead behaves faithlessly or treacherously. When God pleads with His people to come of her, He is pleading with those who follow Him, and are obedient to Him in spirit and in written truth, to detach from and leave those who sincerely claim to follow but clearly are not faithful except in their own deluded minds.

Open your Bibles to Hosea chapter 10.

RE-READ HOSEA 10:9 – end

We can easily be confounded by some of the arcane words and expressions that are used, but in the end, the meaning is plain enough. When we rise upward and view what is being said from the 30,000 ft. panorama, God is describing a historical cycle that we find constantly repeated with Israel; but this same pattern can also be seen throughout all humanity. We find the existence of this pattern because human beings inevitably make the same kinds of decisions throughout the ages, with the results being the same, because God never changes, and therefore the axioms upon which the Universe He created operates never change. A secular book called *The Fourth Turning* explores this phenomenon and in this book, the authors fashion a means to describe this predictable and repetitive pattern by dividing these historical cycles into 4 quadrants. I want to emphasize that this characterization is not God-given, it only establishes a good way to visualize these historical patterns as they emerge and revolve, and by no means is this fictional. History has proved this model to be generally accurate, and the Bible proves it as well. Therefore, this is valuable for every Bible student to learn.

This ageless historical cycle goes something like this:

The First Turning is a **High**. This is an era when institutions of every type are strong and individualism is less desired. Society is confident about its direction, seeing it as good, even if those outside the majority don't like the sense of required societal conformity that this direction mandates. America's most recent First Turning began in 1946 following WWII and probably ended with the assassination of John Kennedy in 1963. Most people married early, sought stable corporate jobs, and slipped quietly into the suburbs to pursue the newly defined American Dream. It is an era in which social, government, and religious institutions are admired, and the appearance of social order, and the demand for it, are at their highest.

The Second Turning is an **Awakening**. This is an era when our institutions come under attack in the name of personal and spiritual freedom and individualism. That is, a desire for a Libertine-based society emerges. Just when society is reaching its high tide of public progress and happiness, people suddenly tire of the expected social and moral discipline and want to recapture a sense of personal power and identity. Younger social activists and people of faith look

back at the previous High as an era of cultural poverty and religious intolerance. America's most recent Awakening happened beginning with the college campus and inner-city revolts of the mid-1960s and probably ended with the tax revolts of the early '80s. This is the part of the historical cycle when the institutions of social order are still operating, but the demand for conformity to the current social order has greatly diminished and in fact, many want this order to be overturned.

The Third Turning is an ***Unraveling***. The mood of this era is in many ways the opposite of the *High* of the First Turning. There is a sense of national malaise and negativity and unhappiness. Social, government, and religious institutions are now weak and no longer trusted, while individualism and outright rebellion against our traditional morals and values is strong and flourishing. *Unravelings* follow Awakenings, and personal pleasure, free from any social or religious fetters of the past, is the rule of the day. America's most recent *Unraveling* began in the early 1980s and we are probably now, in 2022, in the very advanced stages of it, perhaps even on the cusp for the very earliest stage of an impending Fourth Turning. The current era opened with triumphant "Morning in America" individualism and has drifted toward a nearly universal distrust of institutions and leaders, an edgy and radical popular culture, and a competition among many groups to define a new set of societal values. Faith institutions are not immune and have themselves had to reckon with this demand, with the result that some capitulate and comply, while others develop a fortress mentality, and still others begin to seek an entirely new identity that seeks to somehow balance popular trends with what they see as divine truth. Social order is almost dissolved because the demand for social order is low. Other than for our current era, a good example of an earlier Unraveling was the "roaring" 1920s.

The Fourth Turning is a ***Crisis***. This is an era in which a nation's institutional life is actually torn down and rebuilt from the ground up—always in response to a perceived threat to the nation's very survival. It is a time of volatility and change. Civic authority revives in a new form, cultural expression finds more of a community purpose, and people begin to identify themselves as members of a larger group that has embraced a common purpose that they share. In every instance, Fourth Turnings have redefined our national identity. A good example of a begun and completed Fourth Turning started with the stock market crash of

1929 and climaxed with America's entry into World War II. This is an era in which the availability of social order is low, because our social institutions are so weak, even though the cry and demand for social order is rapidly rising, but the social and civic institutions are playing catch-up. Highs always follow Crises... real or contrived crises... and from this comes the new mindset among many that society and morality as we have known it must die and be replaced with something else more appropriate for this new order.

So, there we have it. And while I have related this to you in secular terms and as it especially concerns the USA, these cycles with but little modification can be applied nearly globally, and to almost any point in human history. With that in mind, then Hosea 10 verse 9 is God explaining to Israel about an earlier "Turning" of a *High* in their history that first morphed into a Turning of *Awakening*, but has now morphed into another "Turning" of an *Unraveling*. Another lesson we can learn is that sometimes the *Unraveling* is so complete and destructive that no Fourth Turning can follow. Nations, even Empires, can disappear during an *Unraveling*. Such was soon to happen to Ephraim/Israel. There would be no return to a demand for social order, nor would their social and religious institutions be rebuilt and replaced. Instead, their exile would indeed dissolve Israel as a society and a nation and they will disappear from the world stage for nearly 26 centuries. This is a warning for us: things can, and do, happen in history in which there can be no recovery from an *Unraveling*. I think it is quite right to mentally picture the End Times apocalypse as just such a time when the historical cycle as we have known it throughout the ages comes to a conclusion. Instead, an entire new divine social order called the Kingdom of Heaven is established, governed by a perfect king. Yet, as we also sadly learn in the Bible, because humans occupy it, and because the Evil One still lives, in the end there will still be a rebellion to this divine order of a 1000-year *High*, after which God will annihilate the existing earth and heavens, recreate it, and establish an eternal order that will have no cycles at all.

Verse 9 says:

CJB Hosea 10:9 ⁹ "Since the days of Giv'ah you have sinned, Isra'el. There they took their stand. For these arrogant people at Giv'ah, war was insufficient punishment.

There are various nuanced ways to approach a more precise interpretation of this passage, which mostly revolve around the question of what event, exactly, does Gibeah represent to Hosea? Rashi is insistent that this is referring to the atrocity that took place in Gibeah when a concubine was literally sexually assaulted to death. At this time Gibeah was in the territory of Benjamin, and so it was a number of men of Benjamin who committed this terrible crime, yet they went unpunished. The other tribes of Israel were so incensed at this act that they banded together and attacked Benjamin, nearly wiping them out as a tribe. I think Rashi is correct in his assessment. The more important point, however, is that this event was seen by Yehoveh as a moment in history that redefined Israel. It was a point of departure from what they had once been. Thus, because of what they had become, God is pronouncing a judgment of wrath upon them. In verse 9 they are indicted, and in verse 10 the verdict is given.

Verse 9 says that Israel should have learned from what happened, but instead it merely set them on a new course of wickedness. The war that nearly made Benjamin extinct should have caused all of Israel to examine themselves, repent, and make substantive changes. But, apparently, not even that horrible war was enough to get their attention. So, the reference to Gibeah created a paradigm... a defining pattern... as to the depth of depravity to which God's people had sunk. Therefore, verse 10 says:

CJB Hosea 10:10 *When I wish to, I will discipline them; and the peoples will be gathered against them to discipline them for their two crimes.*"

In a nutshell, God says that because of what He just said about them...who Israel had become... He is going to punish them by using pagan nations to administer His judgment. As a reminder: the use of the term peoples or nations in the Bible always (unless the context makes it otherwise) is referring to gentiles. Since the time of Abraham entering into covenant with God, nations by definition mean "gentile nations". The term "gentile" does not need to be added because for God, at the moment of the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant, there is the nation of Israel, and then there is everyone else. For me, this is further proof that Rashi is correct in thinking that the crime that happened in Gibeah was the gang rape and murder of the concubine, likely combined with the other tribes'

far-overreaching and unjust determination to wipe out all of Benjamin for the crime of a few. But what is the second of the two crimes that this passage speaks of? To this, there is little consensus among Bible scholars. However, since the monarchy of Israel has been front and center for several verses now, the second "crime" might well be the inauguration of King Saul and his choice for a time of Gibeah as his capital. The second sin being that it was at Gibeah where God was rejected as Israel's king, with Saul meant to replace Him. I'll say this another way: until Gibeah, Yehoveh saw Israel's character as defined by the exodus and their wilderness journey. That character has been replaced with a spirit of wickedness, and Gibeah represents an entire new way of life that has begun.... a historical cyclical Turning from their initial *High* to an era of *Awakening*. By the time Hosea recorded this message, the historical cycle had turned yet again to an *Unraveling* and the punishment had already begun.

Verse 11 begins with a very intriguing, picturesque use of an agricultural metaphor to make a point. The point is God's immense disappointment with Israel, whom He had so carefully and lovingly nurtured.

CJB Hosea 10:11 *Efrayim is a well-taught cow- it loves to tread the grain, and I have spared her fair neck. But I will put Efrayim in harness, Y'hudah will have to plow, Ya'akov will harrow his own land.*

Here is the essence of it: in its early days as a set-apart people group, Israel is likened to a young cow. Israel was well-trained via their time in Egypt, their rescue from Egypt, the Torah given to them by God through Moses, by the wilderness journey, and then Yehoveh giving Israel the Land of Canaan for their home. Israel (like the trained cow) at first loved to be obedient to their Master, God... to tread the grain. This is something the cow (the Israelite people) do willingly. God says that because Israel was so young, and because she worked at doing what she was trained up to do, He spared them the yoke. To get a better understanding of what this is getting at we need to understand that at first young cows typically were not put to the yoke, because a yoke was needed to do harder, heavier work. It was common that young cows might be used to simply walk over the stalks of grain spread out on the threshing floor in order to separate the heads from the stalks. In fact, these cows were even allowed the luxury of eating

as they worked... a rather cushy job. Later, this would change, but not because the cow (Israel) had done anything wrong.

The second stage of use on the threshing floor for a cow came later in the training process, and only after they had physically matured. At that point, a yoke was put onto its neck, and then a heavy threshing sled was attached to the yoke. The cow would pull the sled, back and forth, over the stalks of grain, doing a far more thorough job of separating the heads from the stalks and at a much faster pace than only their hooves might accomplish it. The mention of the young cow's lovely neck means that she didn't yet bear the scars and callouses of carrying that heavy and uncomfortable wooden yoke upon it. The easier work for the younger Israel is a metaphor for the wilderness experience, but once matured the harder work (symbolized by the addition of the yoke) would occur for Israel inside the Promised Land. There Israel would be expected to become a well-rooted and set-apart nation for God, with all the responsibilities of being a light to the world. The more mature Israel, having undergone years of training, would be expected to be much more ready to carry out all the terms of the covenant that had been given to them at Mt. Sinai. So, here God has set out His plan for them, reminds them in a beautiful metaphor what He did for them, and how He prepared them for the task.

This metaphor continues in the second part of verse 11. Notice we get a sequence of mention of Ephraim, then Judah, then Jacob. Ephraim is harnessed; Judah shall plough; Jacob shall harrow. The question among Bible academics is if the word Judah belongs in this sequence. The usual couplet that we find in Hosea is Ephraim with Israel; not Ephraim with Judah. So, some Bible scholars think this ought to read something like: "I will harness Ephraim; Israel shall plough; Jacob shall harrow for himself." Other scholars make the case that Judah *does* belong there because then you complete the idea of Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom) together forming Jacob (all of Israel...both kingdoms). I don't know if there is a way to prove either case, but my vote goes towards the word Judah belonging there because it better fits with the inclusion of the word Jacob, which is not questionable. Back in the days of the wilderness journey (which is what the young trained cow represents), it included all the tribes of Israel. It was also all the tribes of Israel that were given land. So, it feels like God is sort of reminiscing... recalling the better times... when Israel

was accepting His training and operating as it should. Saying that Jacob would harrow for himself is to say that when Israel entered the Promised Land, the Canaanites had already planted orchards and vineyards, and established fields, which Israel simply took from them. But now in the land, Israel (Jacob) would begin to do these tasks for themselves.

This same agricultural metaphor continues in verse 12.

CJB Hosea 10:12 *If you sow righteousness for yourselves, you will reap according to grace. Break up unused ground for yourselves, because it is time to seek ADONAI, till he comes and rains down righteousness upon you.*

Now the agricultural metaphor and its actual meaning are combined. Just as with sowing seed for food, Israel is also to "sow" righteousness for themselves, and when this happens at harvest time what comes up will be God's grace. That is, Israel is challenged by the Lord to not just know but also to live according to the terms of the Covenant of Moses. By doing this, they will find that just as by properly preparing the ground and using good seed will produce a bountiful harvest, so by obeying God (righteousness) then every manner of goodness will come to them by means of God's grace towards them in return for their faithfulness. Let's nuance this a bit further.

Two distinct Hebrew words are used here as the qualities needed for God to rain down righteousness upon all Israel. They are: ***tzedakah*** and ***chesed***. ***Tzedakah*** is best interpreted as righteousness in the sense of righteous justice. So, in modern English, the better choice would simply be justice. ***Chesed*** is a concept that includes kindness, grace, and mercy. ***Tzedek*** (what God will rain down) also means righteousness but more in the sense of a spiritual condition, a status before God, of righteousness. Considering the context, I think a good reading is: "If you sow justice for yourselves, you will reap according to mercy. Then skipping to the end of the verse, "Till He comes and rains down His righteousness upon you".

Verse 13 explains that instead of Israel sowing justice and therefore reaping mercy, they acted wickedly.

CJB Hosea 10:13 *You have plowed wickedness, reaped iniquity and eaten the fruit of lies. Because you trusted in your own way, in your large numbers of warriors...*

From the Hebrew standpoint, instead of sowing and then reaping *tzedakah* and *chesed*, Israel sowed and reaped *reshah* (wickedness) and *evel* (injustice). This resulted in them eating the bad fruits of their improper sowing and reaping, *kachash* (deception). That is, obedience has one result, disobedience the opposite result. The former results in divine blessing, the latter results in the divine curse...just as the Covenant of Moses outlines. Probably this is referring to the time of King Menahem son of Gadi who led the people to ignore God's Torah and to instead follow their own ways. This reflects a reality set down in Proverb a couple of hundred years earlier.

CJB Proverbs 11:18 *The profits of the wicked are illusory; but those who sow righteousness gain a true reward.*

Here is the application that as Believers we must understand, expect, and activate in our lives. Personal prosperity is the logical result of good behavior as defined by God's Torah. Equally, national prosperity is the logical consequence of hard work and virtuous behavior as a social order...but it must happen within virtuous behavior as defined by God's Torah. Thus, both individual and national disaster (the opposite) is the consequence of laziness and bad behavior...this, too, is under the definition for wicked behavior in the Torah.

I use the term "logical" instead of spiritual because as I explained in an earlier lesson, human logic (no matter how much we might, at times, want to shove it down) tells us that if there is a Law, there must be a Lawgiver. And, if there is a Law and a Lawgiver, then it must be objective. We know there is a Law because all humans have an innate sense of the existence of something called moral and immoral... of the reality of something called right and wrong...good and evil. Logic further tells us that since, foundationally, we agree this dichotomy exists, then we must ask where this innate sense came from, and further, who decided the boundaries for right and wrong, moral and immoral? I am so disheartened to have recognized a few decades ago that institutional Christianity, as it has developed over the centuries, has discarded this line of logical, innate reason and

opted for no Law, no Lawgiver, and made the definitions of moral, ethical, and right completely subjective and malleable depending upon how one feels in our heart. This is precisely what we are witnessing in the Book of Hosea as it concerns Ephraim/Israel. Why are we so blinded to it? Or worse, honestly, think we are immune from it?

In the Book of Jeremiah is something that we have all heard at one time or another in our walk with Christ, but I think is mouthed and quickly forgotten. It is at the end of a few-verse passage that I want to read it all to you so the context is clear. This message was aimed at Judah at the time it was spoken, with Ephraim/Israel already scattered in exile.

CJB Jeremiah 17:1-9 *"Y'hudah's sin is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts and on the horns of your altars. ² As they remember their children, so they remember their altars and their sacred poles by the green trees on the high hills. ³ My mountain in the field, your wealth and all your treasures will be plundered; because of the sin of your high places throughout your territory. ⁴ You will relinquish your hold on your heritage which I gave you. I will make you serve your enemies in a land you do not know. For you have kindled my fiery anger, and it will burn forever." ⁵ Here is what ADONAI says: "A curse on the person who trusts in humans, who relies on merely human strength, whose heart turns away from ADONAI. ⁶ He will be like a tamarisk in the 'Aravah- when relief comes, it is unaffected; for it lives in the sun-baked desert, in salty, uninhabited land. ⁷ Blessed is the man who trusts in ADONAI; ADONAI will be his security. ⁸ He will be like a tree planted near water; it spreads out its roots by the river; it does not notice when heat comes; and its foliage is luxuriant; it is not anxious in a year of drought but keeps on yielding fruit. ⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than anything else and mortally sick. Who can fathom it?"*

The words and belief that "my heart tells me" to do thus and so, and that this essentially reflects the proper life of a Believer, needs to be discarded and never again considered as legitimate in our lives as Believers. We are warned, unequivocally, that our hearts (meaning our minds) are deceitful and fatally sick. And yes, as the good Prophet points out, it is a mystery as to why this is. But, it is so and we must never think that our Salvation in Jesus or our trust in God will

completely rid our minds of this terrible condition. And yet, because the Church has discarded the one standard God has given us to determine what is actually true and right...a concrete, written standard by which we can know good from evil, moral from immoral...then Christians have been taught to rely on the very thing Scripture tells us not to rely on... our mortally sick hearts...our own minds that inevitably seek our own ways. Again...this is what Ephraim/Israel had done to itself.

The thought of war...of military engagement...is inserted at the end of verse 13 (Israel's deceived way was to put their trust in the large numbers of soldiers they had). Thus, ironically, since Israel put their trust in their military instead of in God, He would punish them militarily. Assyria would invade, kill, and exile them. Their military that they thought so mighty would fall to a much mightier one. Here is another thing that, although I have harped on it throughout our exploration of Hosea, I ask your indulgence that I can do it yet again. What is happening to Israel is no more nor less than exactly what the curse within the Covenant of Moses for breaking God's commandments says would happen.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:45-52 ***⁴⁵ "All these curses will come on you, pursuing you and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you didn't pay attention to what ADONAI your God said, observing his mitzvot and regulations that he gave you. ⁴⁶ These curses will be on you and your descendants as a sign and a wonder forever. ⁴⁷ Because you didn't serve ADONAI your God with joy and gladness in your heart when you had such an abundance of everything; ⁴⁸ ADONAI will send your enemy against you; and you will serve him when you are hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed and lacking everything; he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he destroys you. ⁴⁹ Yes, ADONAI will bring against you a nation from far away that will swoop down on you from the end of the earth like a vulture, a nation whose language you don't understand, ⁵⁰ a nation grim in appearance, whose people neither respect the old nor pity the young. ⁵¹ They will devour the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your soil, until you have been destroyed. They will leave you without grain, wine, olive oil, or your young cattle and sheep- until they have caused you to perish. ⁵² They will besiege all your towns until your high, fortified walls, in which you trusted, collapse everywhere in your land, which ADONAI your God gave you.***

The application is this: for those who claim trust in the God of Israel, but who behave according to our own ways and trust in the might of our armed forces and our intelligence, a military disaster is what will bring us low.

I will close with this thought. Believers: although the vast majority of us have been taught the fairy tale that we have been joined to a covenant with Jesus (a new covenant separate from all other covenants that *abolishes* all earlier covenants), the reality is that by means of Jesus and His sacrifice of courage and love on the Cross, we...who were once strangers to the covenants... have been joined to the same covenants that God made with the Hebrews, only accomplished in a new way. And since that is the case, we are subject to the same laws and commands, the same blessings and the curses, as was (and is) Israel. The curse we have been saved from is eternal death, but most certainly not the curses in the sense of punishments and disciplines for our wrongful behavior...as defined in the Torah.

Next time, we'll finish up chapter 10 and move into chapter 11.