

THE CHURCH ENDANGERED AND INJURED BY WORLDLY ASSOCIATION

Hosea 6:4-7:9

Introduction: Reading the little book of Hosea it is clearly seen that God's people can quickly become inwardly contaminated with corruption. God has separated His people, Israel, and they were to be His peculiar people and He wanted to train them up in virtuous ways and make them to be a blessing to the world. However, they mixed themselves with the surrounding nations in social customs and political ideas. What happened to Israel a long time ago, is happening today to Christ's Church - US!

I. THE CHURCH IS IN DANGER OF UNLAWFUL ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD

1. *"...Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people..."*
 - We are not to shut ourselves out from association with the world for family ties, business and spiritual engagements bring us all together.
 - However, we are not to become *"conformed to the world in it's evil customs and pursuits, its principles and spirit..."*
 - We have no need to go out of the world literally, but we need to keep ourselves from its evil, separate ourselves from its sins and be CHRISTIANS totally.
2. The Church is endangered by the outward nearness of the world.
 - The world is so near and present with us and it appeals to our senses. It influences more than things spiritual and unseen. It gradually gets hold of us and eventually overcomes the careless, like Demas, who forsook God for the world.
 - Pursuing the things of the world takes our attention and before we are aware of it we are walking according to its rules and governed by the "prince of this world."
3. The Church is endangered by the inward tendency to love the world.
 - There are snares and dangers within us, from natural appetites and corrupt desires. We are fond of the world's company and eager for its rewards.
 - Its attractions are strong because resistance within us is weak, little things of the world become treasures. *"...Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world..."*

II. THE CHURCH IS INJURED BY ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD

1. Contact with the world wears away seriousness of mind, intentions for religious duties, neutralizes religious influence and removes religious sentiment.
 - Professors of faith in Jesus mix sinful practices with their "religious" actions and eventually suffer in their character and relationships.
2. There is moral deterioration. *"...Ephraim is a cake not turned..."*
 - Israel had mixed themselves with heathen idolatries and vices and had become worthless.
 - The fire of divine judgment made only an outward impression on them and they became even more hopelessly spoiled by their involvement/conduct with their world.
 - In God's language, Israel was burned on one side and raw on the other, perfectly useless.
 - Soft and pliable under divine chastisement, hardened and cold in their sin, they were half-hearted, half-baked, half-burned displeasing to God and therefore rejected by God.

- Such were the people of Israel and sadly, so are too many "so-called" Christians of today. They have united themselves in hypocrisy and ungodliness in outward performance and inward lukewarmness.
 - If individuals, churches and nations do not have the power to prevent themselves from becoming hot and cold as Israel did, they will become useless and fit for nothing either of the world or of God.
3. There is social injury - **"...*Strangers have devoured his strength...*"**
 - Foreign powers, Assyria and Egypt once helped Israel, now robbed them of money, wasted their treasures and reduced their strength. Like Samson was left without his strength because of his fleshly pleasure, Israel was stripped of social privilege and power.
 - It is sad to think of the many also ruined by their connections with sinful lust. Intellect, memory, dignity and health of body and happiness of the soul, "devoured" by strangers to God and His people - the world.
 4. There is unnatural decay - **"...*Gray hairs are here and there upon him...*"**
 - Loss of inward strength and outward beauty will soon bring age and decay. **"...*people get old before they are young...*"**
 - Churches may decay through discord, worldliness and pride. Families and individuals may fall by sin and die while young.
 - "Gray hairs" are forerunners and forewarners of coming death.
 5. There is religious insensibility - **"...*Yet he knoweth it not...*"**
 - To be insensible of disease and decay is the worst symptom of all. People hide from themselves signs of death and it comes upon them unaware.
 - People think that outward forms, creeds and in the course of time all will be well and they will recover their strength when in fact they are insensible and stupefied in sin, sleeping quietly amid dangers and death. **"...*They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I wake?..*" Proverbs 23:35**

CONCLUSION:

1. Israel was like a cake that was hot on one side and still doughy on the other because of its involvement in worldly affairs.
2. Signs to look for as Christians that point to becoming too involved in worldly matters:
 - A lack of interest in God's work.
 - More concern about material things than the things of God.
 - Uninterested in prayer and God's Word.
 - Having NO conviction about missing worship services, etc.
3. Remedies for being overly involved in worldly matters:
 - Make sure you are a child of God.
 - If you are, then leave the worldly things and return to God.
 - Return to God's Services, God's Word, Prayer, Love and service.

(Preached by my father in 1957)