

## Now is the Time

Hosea 10:12

Over the past few weeks we have considered the condition of Israel and her need for repentance. God loved His people and desired to have a fulfilling relationship with them. Unfortunately they sought the ways of the world and the desires of the flesh while neglecting their commitment to God. Having warned of impending judgment, God offered another opportunity for repentance and restoration.

Although Hosea penned these words thousands of years ago, I see a great parallel to America and the world at large. The prophet of old recorded timeless truth that is relevant and needful in our modern day. Like Israel of old, we need to repent of sin, return to God, and live faithfully for Him.

Our text verse today deals with an issue that transcends generations and geographic boundaries. It deals with the principles of sowing and harvest. You don't have to have an agricultural degree to understand these principles. We all know that we reap what we sow. Much is being sown today, and soon enough we will reap what we have sown, whether it is good or bad. It was time for Israel to consider their actions and we too need to be mindful of our lives. I want to examine the [instructions](#) within the text as we consider the thought: [Now is the Time](#).

**I. The Challenge Extended** (12a) – [Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy](#). Through Hosea, God extended a direct challenge to Israel. Notice:

**A. The Participation** (12a) – [Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy](#). Like many before them, those in Israel refused to admit their need. They viewed themselves as God's chosen people, refusing to think God would in any way bring judgment upon them. Their lives were void of reverence for the Lord, having no desire to serve Him or live according to His ways, and yet they lived in an imaginary world void of reality. God challenged them to examine their own lives and personally engage in an act of repentance and obedience to Him.

- As I consider the state of affairs within the modern church, I sense the same complacency and denial of truth. The church seeks to lay the blame for our decline at the feet of the world and the devil, and yet we never sense any need for improvement in our spiritual lives. We have been lulled to sleep by the enemy, led to believe our lack of commitment has not, in any way, contributed to the spiritual condition in our world and the decline of the church. While I agree that we face opposition and fight spiritual battles, I also know it is time for the church to assume some

ownership in our decline. Until the church repents of her sin and returns to the Lord, the decline will continue.

**B. The Obligation** (12a) – [Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy](#). Rather than living as they pleased, seeking only to satisfy the flesh, God challenged them to sow in righteousness in order to reap His mercy. He reminded them of the unchangeable truth – you always reap what you sow. Israel had not been sowing righteousness. Consider the rebuke in [V.13 – Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men](#). They were sowing wickedness and reaping iniquity. If they were to avoid judgment and enjoy God’s blessing, they must begin to sow in righteousness.

- This same principle applies spiritually in our day. If we are to enjoy the blessing of God, live fulfilling lives spiritually, and see the church strong and healthy, we too must sow in righteousness. We all share responsibility for the health and growth of the church. If we are not pleased with where we are, we need to look within. What are we sowing today? Are we sowing seeds of peace, love, encouragement and righteousness, or are we sowing seeds of anger, bitterness, and discord?

- The principles of sowing and reaping will never change. We always reap what we sow; we reap later than we sow, and we always reap more than we sow. These are sobering thoughts when considered from a spiritual perspective. [2 Cor.9:6 – But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully](#). [Gal.6:7-9 – Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.](#) <sup>[8]</sup> [For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.](#) <sup>[9]</sup> [And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.](#)

**II. The Cultivation Required** (12b) – [break up your fallow ground](#). God also challenged Israel regarding the condition of their lives and the need for proper cultivation for sowing good seed. Consider:

**A. The Preparation** (12b) – [break up your fallow ground](#). No doubt the Israelites understood what the Lord meant. If there was to be any hope of a harvest, the soil had to be prepared. They had to cultivate the fallow ground, loosening it up in order to receive the seed. The fallow ground spoke of areas that had been neglected, allowing weeds and briars to overtake it. It would have been futile to plant seeds without the proper preparation. First of all, it would have been difficult to get the seed into the ground without cultivating the land. Also, had the weeds and briars not been removed, the seed would have been forced to compete with those while trying to grow and

produce fruit. If they were to have any hope of an eventual harvest, the fallow ground had to be cultivated and prepared for planting.

- No doubt we all have areas in our lives that have been neglected and need attention. We cannot expect to enjoy a fulfilling relationship with the Lord while we have areas that we have marked “off limits” regarding the Spirit. We must be sensitive to the Lord and His leading, willing to address the issues within our lives spiritually. It may be that we have grown complacent in our walk with the Lord; we may be lacking in prayer or Bible study; there may be needs where a relationship has been hindered and needs to be restored. Whatever the needs are, we must be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to break up those areas in our lives that have been taken over by attitudes or actions that prevent spiritual growth.

**B. The Potential** (12b) – [break up your fallow ground](#). God knew Israel better than they knew themselves. He had called them unto Himself, making a great and mighty nation of them, blessing them abundantly in the past. There had been seasons when she was committed to the Lord and served Him faithfully. She had once been a witness to the true and living God. The Lord knew she had potential for a future harvest, but the fallow ground had to be broken up first.

- While the church faces many challenges, she enjoys great potential. We are not just another flash in the pan, so to speak. We have been bought with a price, redeemed by Jesus Christ our Lord. We are His body, filled with His Spirit. The church may face decline, but she will never die. Fellowship has unlimited potential for the Lord, but we too must be willing to admit and address the various needs we face. We cannot imagine what this local body of believers could accomplish for the glory of God and the good of the Kingdom if we would apply this timeless principle. I am certain the Spirit has already revealed the areas in our individual lives that need attention. We have great potential for the Lord. The question is – are we willing to break up our fallow ground in order to see the harvest?

**III. The Commitment Expected** (12c) – [for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you](#). While Israel may not have desired to admit their need, I am certain they were aware of it. God had sent countless warnings and admonitions to return unto Him. Here He revealed the commitment He expected and required. Consider:

**A. The Urgency** (12c) – [for it is time to seek the LORD](#). God warned that time was running out, especially for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Sadly they would not heed His warning, and would eventually be conquered by the Assyrians. God was pleading with Israel to renew their commitment to Him and serve Him in complete obedience and surrender.

- While our situation is much different, the urgency remains. The saved by grace have been delivered from condemnation and set free from the bondage of sin, but the needs we have are many. Unfortunately, the western church has lost her zeal. We have grown complacent in our convenience. We lack a genuine burden for the unsaved. Many view their relationship with Christ as one that is reserved for once a week. Church is not a place we visit on occasion, it is a lifestyle we are expected to live. The church is not this building or these facilities; it is the body of Christ. It is time for us to repent of our sin and seek the Lord. The needs are great in our day. Do we sense the urgency and have a desire to rise to the occasion by the help of the Lord?

**B. The Consistency** (12c) – *for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.* God wanted Israel to understand the great need for continued fellowship with Him. The needs they faced could not be resolved with a casual, unconcerned attitude or approach. Their need required a continual pursuit of the Lord, seeking Him until they received the blessing they so desperately needed. Spiritual renewal would require committed resolve on their part.

- Complacence in the modern church has created a lack of consistency. I realize we all have spiritual highs and lows, but it cannot be denied that we seem content with things as they are. We may experience the hint of spiritual renewal, but it is usually short lived. Most are content with the current state of affairs within the church and lack the commitment to seek the Lord until we experience a genuine revival.
- We must be willing to seek the Lord until we experience a genuine move of the Holy Spirit among us that transforms our complacence into committed zeal for the Lord. Wouldn't it be wonderful to experience a move of God in our midst that created a renewed desire for the Lord? Wouldn't it be great if we all left the services already anticipating the next opportunity to worship? What if we all had a genuine desire to serve the Lord and reach the lost? What a difference we would see – not only here at Fellowship, but in our community as well.

**Conclusion:** I will admit, the Lord convicted me as I prepared this message. I have not preached a message “at” you today; I have preached a message to the church, and that includes me as well. I know there is much room for improvement in my life. It is time for us to seek the Lord with a willingness to allow the Spirit to break up the fallow ground in our lives. If the Lord has spoken to you today, I urge you to come and seek Him for guidance and direction. Maybe you need to confess a need or seek wisdom and strength to serve Him. There may be someone here that is yet unsaved, never having responded to His offer of grace. This local body of believers will only be as strong and productive as the individuals who make it up. If there are needs, please come today!