

REMARKABLE MERCY

“When Israel [was] a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. [As] they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped [and] fed them. "He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, Because they refused to repent. And the sword shall slash in his cities, Devour his districts, And consume [them], Because of their own counsels. My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt [Him].”

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? [How] can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? [How] can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I [am] God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror. "They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, Then [His] sons shall come trembling from the west; They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, Like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," Says the LORD. "Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, And the house of Israel with deceit; But Judah still walks with God, Even with the Holy One [who is] faithful.” (Hosea 11:1-12 NKJV)

This is not God wavering in His mind, but God stooping to accommodate man. God knows without any shadow of turning what He will do. However, this passage teaches us how remarkable God’s mercy is.

My people are bent on backsliding, God says. Yet instead of destroying them, as He would have every right, He expresses His love. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over Israel?

I am always very careful not to encourage or excuse any kind of backsliding. The reason is backsliding is a characteristic of the lost. In addition, we need to remember that Israel is a picture of a rebellious people. However, I would be unfaithful not to point out God’s tender heart. Oh how He loves you and me! He will keep His children safe even if He must cause them to tremble.

My dear friends we stand not on our own merits, but on the merits of Christ. No matter how long you live as a Christian you will continue to sin. It had better grieve your heart when you do, but you will sin.

It should be a comfort to you when God chastens you back. “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected [us], and we paid [them] respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened [us] as seemed [best] to them, but He for [our] profit, that [we] may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be [dislocated], but rather be healed.” (Hebrews 12:4-13 NKJV)