

He went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. Hosea 1: 3

Under the glorious reign of Jeroboam, Israel had become very prosperous; but this period of wealth was one of shameless idolatry, self-indulgence, and oppression of the poor. The people were unfaithful to their marriage covenant with Jehovah; yet He loved them still. With the love that a husband may bear to the woman who is mother of his children, but who has shown herself worthless or abandoned, so God still loved, and wooed, and sought to reclaim. All this was set forth in Hosea's sad personal history.

He married one who was probably well known at the court for her infidelities. Her children's names were all significant. The first was called Jezreel, to indicate their prophetic import; the daughter, "Unpitied"; the third child, "Not My People"; and these children were accustomed, in after years, to go between the prophet and his wife and plead with her. "Plead with your mother, plead."

What a living picture this is of God's relations to ourselves! He has loved us, not because we were pure, and holy, and lovely; for, in fact, He knew that we were the very reverse. But with the clear prevision of our native sin and unfaithfulness, He took us into covenant relationship with Himself. Not because we were good, but to make us so; not because we were faithful, but to lead us to be so. He has given us all kinds of blessings. But, alas, how ill we have requited Him! We have departed from Him, and grossly betrayed His trust; till He has been reluctantly obliged to leave us to ourselves. But He waits to be gracious; and if we repent and turn to Him, He will say to us, Ammi, my people; and Ruhamah, thou hast obtained mercy.

何西阿去娶了滴拉音的女兒歌蔑。 何一3

在耶羅波安[第二個耶羅波安。王下十四23-29]輝煌的統治之下，以色列非常繁榮，但這富裕時期卻有可恥的偶像崇拜、放縱、並欺壓窮人。百姓對於他們與耶和華神之間的婚約不忠，但耶和華仍愛他們。就像一個丈夫，依然愛他兒女的母親，但是這婦人卻如此卑鄙墮落。同樣，神仍然戀愛、央求、設法挽回以色列民。所有這一切都在何西阿個人悲慘的經歷中展現。

他娶一個在求愛圈子裡出名不貞的婦人。她兒女的名字都有極深的意思。為表明這些名字具有重要的預言意義，老大名叫耶斯列(4節)，女兒叫「不蒙憐憫」(6節)，老三叫「非我民」(9節)。而這些孩子在日後都經常來往於先知和他妻子之間，與她爭辯。「你們要與你們的母親大大的爭辯。(二2)」

這畫面何等生動地表明神與我們的關係！祂愛我們，不是因為我們純良、聖潔、可愛；事實上，祂知道我們正好相反。但就在祂清楚預知我們的罪和不忠，祂卻使我們與祂進入立約的關係。不是因為我們良善，而是要使我們成為良善；不是因為我們忠心，而是要引導我們成為忠心。祂賜給我們各樣的福氣。可惜我們卻以惡回報祂！我們離開祂，大大背叛了祂的信任；直到祂不得不任憑我們。然而祂等待要施憐憫；當我們悔改轉向祂，祂就要稱我們為：阿米 — 我的子民；路哈瑪 — 你們已蒙了憐憫(二1)。

The valley of Achor for a door of hope. Hosea 2: 15

We are familiar with the story of the valley of Achor, where Achan the troubler of Israel was stoned to death. We can almost fancy the long stony valley through which again the house of Israel was made to pass. The prophet foresaw the heavy judgments which were about to fall upon the land, as God took back his corn and wine and flax, and laid waste their vines and fig-trees. It seemed as though the nation were again in the valley of trouble; and as the people take their weary way, dropping with fatigue and privation, behold, a door suddenly opens in the stony wall of flint, through which they pass into a land of corn, and wine, and wifely loyalty to their true husband. Thus the traveller piercing the Alps will, within the space of an hour, leave the northern slopes of ice and snow, and emerge upon the fertile plains of Italy.

It is a beautiful similitude, and one that still has its counterpart in spiritual experience. You, too, are in the valley of Achor--brought there in consequence of your sins; your life is overcast; your heart desolate, Ah, how different it is with you now, compared with those first glad days when you went out after God, in the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals! God cannot leave you. He comes and pleads, "Return unto Me; thou art mine." Will you answer his tender pleading with repentance, faith, and prayer? Will you cry, "Oh that it were with me as in the first days!" Then, immediately, right before you, the door of hope will spring open; and you will pass from winter to summer; from ice to vernal heat. Dare to believe that in your Valley of Achor there is but a door between you and the divine betrothal--only a step.

亞割谷作為指望的門。 何二15

我們都熟悉亞割谷的故事，在那裡亞干這個攪擾以色列的人被石頭打死（書七25-26）。此時我們幾乎可以想像，以色列家如何再一次必須走過那狹長的石頭山谷。當神已收回祂的五穀、新酒和麻，並使他們的葡萄樹和無花果樹荒蕪的時候（9, 11節），先知就預知嚴厲的審判即將臨到。全國似乎再度進入困難之谷；正當百姓疲憊前行，在力竭和匱乏中倒下，看啊，堅硬的火石山壁中突然打開一道門，通過此門就是五穀、新酒和妻子忠於她真正丈夫的地方（22, 16節）。就像奮力穿越阿爾卑斯山的旅行者，在一小時的腳程之內，離開北面冰雪的山坡，出現在屬意大利的肥沃平原上。

這是一個美麗的比喻，在屬靈的經歷上有應對的情形。你也正在亞割谷——因著罪的後果陷在那裡；你的生活陰暗，你的心淒涼。與起初追隨神的快樂日子相比，是何等不同，當時你年少善良，充滿婚姻的愛情。神不能離棄你，祂來向你懇求：「回來吧，你是屬我。」你是否以悔改、信心和禱告來回應祂親切的懇求。你是否呼叫：「但願我如起初的日子一樣。」馬上，就在你面前，「指望之門」立即彈開，於是你從冬天進入夏天，從冰寒進入春暖。要勇敢相信，在你的亞割谷中，你與聘定你的神之間，只隔一道門——僅一步之遙。

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God. Hosea 3 : 5

The unfaithful wife had left husband and children, and sunk into abject poverty and shameful disgrace; but Hosea is bidden to seek her again and bring her to his home. It was a wonderful act of condescending love on his part, to be willing to condone the past and take the poor stricken thing to his well-ordered dwelling. Nothing could have done it but the strong love which had followed her through all her wanderings, refusing to let her go. We cannot certainly affirm that Hosea's love succeeded in making his Guinevere fair and lovely again; but we may cherish the hope that in this his compassionate love was recompensed.

Through the tragedy of the prophet's domestic life, the people were called to see the mystery of the divine faithful love. "The Lord loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods and love cakes of raisins" (ver. 1, R.V.). The people in their wandering and rebellion had been unfaithful to the marriage vow plighted at Sinai. They had gone after many lovers; but God's redeeming love would not let them go. That love still follows them; and though they have been for so many centuries without king, prince, sacrifice, or temple, they shall doubtless return to God. And is not this marvellous Zionist movement one further step towards the ultimate recognition and reunion?

You, too, have been without king or priest; without tears of penitence, or smiles of conscious acceptance. But the love of God has never ceased to follow you. And now, in your abject need, He seeks you out, and says, "Be for Me only." Will you not come back to the goodness of God in these your latter days?

後來以色列人必歸回，尋求他們的神耶和華。 何三5

這不貞的妻子拋棄丈夫和孩子，而且落入赤貧和羞恥之中。但何西阿受神囑咐再去尋找她，將她帶回家。何西阿這種俯就的愛是一件了不起的行動，他願意原諒她已往的罪過，接納這個受打擊的可憐人到他條理井然的家中。除了強烈的愛情，沒有別的力量，能使他在她到處浪蕩時仍舊追蹤她，不放棄她。我們不能確定何西阿的愛情是否成功地使他的「關尼薇爾」[註] 重新秀麗可愛，但我們可以指望，他的深情摯愛得到了報答。

透過先知的家庭悲劇，百姓被召來明白神信實之愛的奧祕。「以色列人雖然偏向別神，喜愛葡萄餅，耶和華還是愛他們。(1節)」百姓在漂流悖逆的時候，背棄了在西乃山所立婚姻的誓言。百姓追隨許多其他的情人，但神救贖的愛沒有放棄他們。那愛仍一直隨著他們；雖然幾百年來他們沒有君王、沒有首領、沒有祭祀、沒有聖殿；無疑地，他們必歸向神。這神奇的猶太復國運動，豈不是向最終的認識與復合更邁進一步嗎？

同樣地，你也一直沒有君王和祭司；沒有悔改的淚水，沒有感覺被接納的笑容。但神的愛從未停止追隨你。在你可憐無助時，祂找到你，並說：「你要單單歸我。」你怎能不在你末後的日子，歸回神的慈愛呢？

[註] 英國威爾斯的民間傳奇。記錄在傑弗里的《歷史》*History* 一書之中。相傳關尼薇爾為亞瑟王的皇后，與亞瑟王圓桌武士之一的藍瑟勒爵士有一段戀情，後來亞瑟王仍接納她，與她重修舊好。

The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. Hosea 4: 1, 3

Throughout Old Testament the sin of the people and the prosperity or otherwise of their country are closely conjoined. If the people please God, harvests are plentiful, and the seasons of the year pursue their round in unbroken bounty. If the people backslide, the land is smitten. There is probably a much deeper connection than we suppose between the moral condition of our nation and its prosperity. It is at least remarkable that ever since the Indian Government has legalized impurity in India, and has made money out of the vices of Chinamen, that empire has been smitten with drought and pestilence. So with Africa; the injustice with which the natives have been treated has been terribly avenged in the rinderpest which has swept over the land. And may there not be a close connection between the vice, Sabbath-breaking, and drunkenness of Great Britain, and the agricultural distress which has so long driven our people from the open country to life in the cities? It is an awful thing when God has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. Sin is then terribly avenged.

One noticeable feature with all the prophets is their intense devotion to God on the one hand, and their ardent patriotism on the other. They never scrupled to denounce the sins which were bringing their land to desolation, and to indicate the inevitable result. In the present instance, Hosea turned on the priests and showed how accountable they were for the desolation of the country.

On a wider scale still, we remember that creation groaneth and travaileth in pain because of sin; and its emancipation awaits the advent of the Lord, and the manifestation of his saints (Rom. 8: 21).

耶和華與這地的居民爭辯。 何四1, 3

在整個舊約的歷史中，百姓的罪和他們國家的盛衰緊密連結在一起。當百姓討神喜悅，五穀豐收、四季按時更替、綿延不斷；當百姓墮落，地就遭受擊打。我們國家[大英帝國]的道德情形與其興盛之間的關係，可能比我們想像的更密切。至少有一件事引人注目，就是在英國殖民時期的印度政府，將不道德的事合法化[指種植及販售鴉片]，而在中國人的惡習上獲利時，帝國就受到旱災和瘟疫的擊打。在非洲也是如此，因著對土著的不公，牛瘟蔓延全非洲。難道大英帝國的惡行、不守主日、酗酒，與長期農業上的欠收，迫使人民離開農村到都市去討生活，是毫無關連的嗎？當神與當地的居民有爭辯的時候，是一件可怕的事。罪是要遭到嚴厲報應的。

所有的先知都有一個明顯的特點，他們一面熱切愛神，另一面又強烈愛自己的國家。他們從不顧忌去指責陷國家於荒涼的罪，並指出罪的必然後果。在本章的例子裡，何西阿攻擊祭司並指出他們對國家荒涼要負很大的責任。

但從更廣大的規模來看，我們不要忘記，因著人類的罪，受造之物都在歎息、勞苦，切望等候主的降臨，和祂聖徒的顯現，使他們[受造之物]脫離轄制(羅八19-22)。

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face. Hosea 5 : 15

The withdrawal of God's countenance and protection involved the exile of Israel from their own land. No weapon formed against them could prosper, so long as they walked with their Almighty Friend; but sin severed them from his care, and cut them adrift to be swept before the storm of the invader.

There is always a "till" in God's withdrawals. He tears that He may heal; goes that He may come; leaves, that He may return so soon as the afflicted soul is led to seek his face. May not this be your lot? You seem deserted by man and God, life is going very hardly with you; thick darkness broods over your soul, and sore affliction devastates your life; yes, and worse is threatened. But is there not an offence somewhere that needs to be acknowledged; a sin that should be confessed?

Search yourself by the suggestions of this chapter. Have you in any way been a snare or a net to other souls, injuring them by your example or conversation (ver. 1)? Have you been unfaithful to your immortal lover, Christ (ver. 3)? Have you become proud of any of God's gifts, or the position to which they have lifted you (ver. 5)? Have you been grasping and fraudulent, like those who secretly remove the landmark to include a little more of their neighbour's lands with their own (ver. 10)? Have you willingly walked after the statutes of Omri (ver. 11, and 1 Kings 16: 25)? Have you gone for help away from God to some unhallowed alliance, such as is represented by King Jareb, the Assyrian, whose alliance Israel sought (ver. 13)? Ask God what controversy He has with you, and put it away. You will be astonished to discover what evils you have been harbouring. But the result will be salutary indeed.

我要回到原處，等到他們自覺有罪，尋求我面。 何五15

神撤回祂的臉面和保護，使以色列人從自己的土地上被趕出。當以色列人和全能的神作朋友，與祂同行時，沒有任何敵人的武器能勝過他們；但罪使他們與神的看顧隔絕，入侵的敵人就要如風暴襲擊，趕散他們。

神離去的時候，總有一個「等到」(15節)。祂撕裂，是為醫治(何六1)；祂離去是為回來；祂離開，使那受傷的人蒙引導尋求祂的面，祂就可以儘快回來。你的情況不就是如此嗎？你好像被人、被神拋棄了，你的人生過得很辛苦，你的心被黑暗籠罩，你的生命被痛苦摧毀。是的，還有變遭的跡象。莫非在某處還有過犯需要承認，就是還有需要認的罪？

你要照這章所提示的作自我省察。你是否在什麼方面成為別人的陷阱或網羅，你的言行舉止是否使別人受到傷害(1節)？你是否對你永遠的良人基督不忠(3節)？你是否因神給你的恩賜，或祂賜你的高位而驕傲(5節)？你曾否貪婪欺詐，像那些暗中挪移地界的人，多佔一點鄰舍的土地(10節)。你是否甘心遵守暗利的規定(11節, 王上十六25)？是否離開神而向不虔敬的聯盟求助，好像以色列人去求與亞述的耶雷布王結盟一樣(13節)？你要求問神，祂在哪件事上與你爭辯，就趕快除掉它。你會驚訝發現你心中懷著許多罪惡，但認罪的結果必定使你受益。

Let us follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is sure as the morning. Hosea 6: 3 (R.V.)

You may always count on God. If there is variation in his relations with us, it is on our side, not on his. Just as surely as we return to Him, we shall find Him running to meet and greet and receive us with a glad welcome.

The exquisite words of the text derive additional beauty when we consider them in the light of modern astronomy. The spot on which we live, when the day is done, slowly turns away from the face of the sun; and as each moment passes, plunges further and further from its wholesome, blessed light. At midnight we look out into the abyss of space in the opposite direction to the solar throne. But the moment when we have reached our furthest from the sun is followed by another, in which we begin to return to the light and glory of the perfect day. So when the soul has reached its furthest from God, it may immediately return to Him. Let us return. Let us know. Let us follow on to know the Lord.

Is there any doubt about our reception? No; there cannot be. Look again at the analogy of the physical night. During our absence the sun has not shifted from his place. We shall find him waiting for us; his going forth is prepared. We have but to pass into his blessed beams, which had not ceased to pour forth through the hours, which to us were so cold and dark. So our God is always waiting for us. He is just where we left Him. In Him can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. As certainly as we count on the dayspring may we count on God. Move then Godwards, through the dark hours. On the third day--the day of Resurrection--He will burst on your view.

我們 ... 竭力追求認識祂，祂出現確如晨光。 何六3

你可以永遠倚靠神。如果祂與我們的關係有什麼變動，原因是在我們這邊，不在祂那邊。同樣可以確定的，當我們回轉歸向祂時，祂必快跑前來，歡喜快樂地歡迎我們。

我們從現代天文學的觀點，來思想這段優美的經文，就發現更多的美感。我們所住的地點，在白日已盡之時，就慢慢離開太陽的面光；隨著每一刻的過去，越來越遠離太陽有益、有福的光芒。午夜時分，我們看到的是背著太陽寶座的黑暗深淵。但當我們到了離太陽最遠的時候，緊接著我們就開始重新回到另一個明光照耀的白天。所以當人遠離神到極處時，很可能就馬上要歸向祂了。但願我們回轉，但願我們認識，但願我們追求認識祂。

我們蒙神接納有何疑問呢？沒有，不可能有。你再看一下黑夜的相似之處。當我們不在陽光之下時，太陽並沒有改變他的位置。我們必定發現太陽在等我們；他的出現是早已預備好的。在我們覺得又黑又冷的時候，太陽光沒有停止照射，我們只需進到太陽的光中。同樣，神也是一直在等待我們。祂就在我們離開祂的地方。祂沒有改變，也沒有轉動的影兒(雅一17)。就如我們期待黎明，我們也可以同樣地期待神。你在黑暗的時候，要朝神的方向移動。第三日，就是復活之日(路廿四7)，祂要突然出現在你眼前。

Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. Hosea 7: 9

Sin in its worst forms was prevalent among the people, and secretly deteriorated their strength. Of this, however, they were unconscious; but imagined that they were as strong as at other times, anticipating long years of national prosperity. They little weened that they had reached the old age of their history, with its attendant decrepitude and helplessness. What a striking illustration of the insidious process of decay, of unconscious deterioration, of the departure of the Samson-might while we wist it not.

But is not this always the case with the initial stages of backsliding, of which this is the most dangerous element, that we are so largely unaware of the change that has come over us? Gradually and almost insensibly we lose our watchfulness over our thoughts; our relish for the society of God's people; our delight in God's house; our interest in the salvation of others; our sensitiveness of conscience as to the conventionalities of trade or society. We do not realize it; we are not specially concerned; we have no idea that the white ant is eating out the substance of our furniture, and the dry-rot undermining the rafters of our house. Strangers are devouring our strength; grey hairs are indicating our decay--to all eyes but our own. We grow grey almost imperceptibly; the strength of our manhood is very slowly undermined; the degrees of spiritual declension are as the fall of the year through the last days of summer. But it need not be if we would regard ourselves in the mirror of God's Word.

*It is strange: but life's currents drift us
so surely and swiftly on,
That we scarcely notice the changes
And how many things are gone.*

頭髮斑白，他也不覺得。 何七9

最惡劣的罪在百姓當中流行，暗暗使他們的力量退化。然而，他們並沒有察覺到這一點；卻以為他們像以前的時期那樣堅強，指望國家長久繁榮。他們並不認為他們的國家已經到了歷史的老年期，而其臣僕衰老無助。這是一個多麼顯著的例證，說明不知不覺衰敗的過程，說明不察覺墮落的過程，說明參孫的力氣在不知不覺中離開的過程。

但是在墮落的初期，豈不都是這樣的情形嗎？墮落最危險的因素豈不是我們大體上沒有感覺到改變已經臨到嗎？漸漸且不知不覺，我們失去了對自己思想的警覺；失去對神子民群體的興趣；失去對神家的喜愛；失去對其他人得救的關心；在生意或社會的習俗中失去良心的敏銳。我們確實沒有意識到，我們並沒有特別關心；我們不知道白蟻正在蛀蝕我們的家具，腐朽病在暗中破壞我們房屋的椽木。陌生人在吞噬我們的力量，灰白的頭髮向所有人的眼睛表明我們的衰老，我們自己卻看不見。我們不知不覺變老，壯年的力量也在慢慢削弱，靈性逐漸衰退，就如夏天末了的日子轉成秋天。但是如果我們能以神的話語作為鏡子來察看自己，就不需要有這樣的情形。

真希奇：生命的潮流將我們沖走
是如此實在且急速，
我們幾乎沒有注意到改變，
也不知許多事物已經消逝。

I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts. Hosea 8:12 (R.V.)

The A.V. slightly differs here: "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." God's will is so all-sided and far-reaching in its scope, that it cannot be contained in one precept or a thousand. It needs ten thousand precepts to set forth its heights, and lengths, and breadths, and to cover all the circumstances of our lives. But how thoughtful God is in anticipating our ten thousand difficulties, perplexities, and questions; and in directing us how He would wish us to act. Anticipating all the steps of our life, God has written ten thousand precepts to guide us.

But what great things have been unfolded to us in the Law of God--using that term to cover the entire compass of revelation! Mysteries which pass the conception of angels have been placed within the reach of men. Our Father has beckoned us to share with Him the sublimest secrets of his government.

Let us not count them as strange things. We often say to one another: "Do not treat me as a stranger." And is not this the sense in which we may get estranged from the word and thought of God--keeping them only for special times; giving them courtly entertainment; but refusing to admit them to the familiarity of daily intercourse? Nothing hurts God more than this! Never perform your daily duties as though God must be shut out from them. If you keep one day sacred, it is that all time may be sanctified: if you keep one place private for prayer and worship, it is that the light which shines there may irradiate all the places of your daily occupation; if you keep one meal for special meditation on the love of Jesus, it is that whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, all should be done for Him.

我為他寫了律法萬條。 何八12

英文欽定本在這裡的翻譯稍有不同：「我為他寫了重大之事的律法，他卻以為與他毫無關涉。」神的旨意是那麼全面，涉及的範圍很廣，不是一條或千條律法就能包括的。需要一萬條律法去闡明神旨意的高、長、闊，並包括我們生命的所有情形。神的設想何等周到，祂預料我們有一萬個艱難、困惑和疑問；並指示我們祂希望我們如何行事。神預期我們人生的每一步，寫了萬條律法來引導我們。

神的律法已向我們展示何等重大的事——用「萬」（重大）這個詞來包括啟示的整個範圍！超越天使理解的奧秘，卻放在人理解的範圍之內。我們的天父，召喚我們共享祂治理的崇高祕密。

但願我們不以為這些事與我們無關涉。我們經常彼此說：「不要待我像與你無關的外人。」在我們與神的話語及神的思想疏遠時，不就是這個意思嗎？——我們將律法看作只為特殊的時候；給予優雅的款待；卻拒絕接納神的律法進入每天親密的交通之中。沒有什麼比這種作法更傷神的心了！絕不要在你執行日常職責時，好像必須將神關在門外。如果你將一天奉獻為著神，你所有的時間都該分別為聖；如果你保留一處用作個人祈禱和敬拜的地方，這裡所發出的光，就照亮你每天所到之處；如果你禁食一餐，特別用來思想耶穌的愛，那就使你或吃或喝，無論做什麼，都為祂而行（林前十31）。

Ephraim was a watchman with my God. Hosea 9:8 (R.V.)

Watch with God. To watch with God is the privilege of comparatively few. Eight were left outside the garden; to three only did Jesus say, "Come and watch." To watch for the morning star, for the first flowers of the coming spring, for the coming of the Bridegroom, for the setting up of the Kingdom--such is the privilege of those elect souls who are bidden to take their lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom. It is a high honour to be appointed to watch with God the slow evolution of his purpose; to stand on the watchtower and see what He will say; to be a watchman for the people, a spokesman of their danger when the sword approaches; to be allowed to enter into some of his tears, and yearnings, and prayers, as He beholds the city and weeps over it.

WATCH AGAINST SIN. But we may be displaced from that position of privilege and responsibility as Israel was. We learn that at this time the chosen had deeply corrupted themselves, as in the darkest days of the Judges; and we may fall into similar corruption and rebellion, unless we watch ourselves, whilst we watch with God. Let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. Corruption is always around us in this world of death. Its germs float on every breeze. We need, therefore, to steep ourselves in the antiseptic of the Holy Spirit's grace. This is the true Eucalyptus in which the germs of disease perish.

WATCH UNTO PRAYER. "Prayer," said Phillips Brooks, "is not compelling God's reluctance, but laying hold of God's willingness." It is as though we waited for God's movements to bless us, and taking the stream at the flow, launched our heavy barge upon it, that his power might bear us forward.

以法蓮曾與我的神一同作守望者。 何九8（另譯）（「守望」亦可譯作「儆醒」）

與神一同守望。與神一同守望是相對少數奉派之人的特權。八個門徒留在客西馬尼園外；耶穌只對三個說：「來和我一同儆醒。（太廿六36-38）」儆醒等候晨星（彼後一19）；儆醒等候即將來到春天新開的花朵；儆醒等候新郎來到；儆醒等候國度的建立 — 這就是那些蒙揀選之人的特權，他們受吩咐拿著燈，出去迎接新郎（太廿五1）。這是很高的尊榮，奉派與神一同守望祂的計畫緩緩展開；奉派站在瞭望台上看祂要說什麼；奉派為百姓作守望的，當戰爭臨近時，給他們警告；奉派在祂看見耶路撒冷城，而為這城哀哭時（路十九41），得以與祂一同流淚、歎息、祈禱。

儆醒防備罪。我們可能失去這個特殊權利和責任的位分，像從前的以色列人一樣。我們知道現今神所揀選的人已經嚴重敗壞了自己，如同士師時代最黑暗的日子；而且我們可能陷入同樣的墮落和背叛，除非我們自己儆醒，與神一同守望。但願我們儆醒禱告，以免入了迷惑（太廿六41）。在這個死亡的世界裡，敗壞一直在我們身邊。敗壞的細菌就飄浮在每陣風中。因此，我們需要浸在聖靈的恩典中消毒自己。這是真正的尤加利樹，在其中病菌消滅。

儆醒禱告（彼前四7）。布魯克斯[註]說過，「禱告不是強迫神作祂不情願的事，而是抓住神作祂樂意作的事。」就彷彿我們等候神來祝福我們，而且要趁著溪流的水位上漲，啟動我們笨重的駁船，使祂的能力可以載我們前行。

[註] 布魯克斯Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893, 美國聖公會牧師。著名聖誕詩歌《小伯利恆》*O Little Town of Bethlehem* 就是他為所牧養的費城聖三一教會主日學寫的。

Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord. Hosea 10: 12

THE FALLOW GROUND. There is a great deal of fallow ground in our hearts and lives; it has borne no crops of righteousness. Weeds have covered the unfruitful acres with their rank growth, and have scattered their thistledown into other lots. The rain has fallen and the sun has shone in vain. In some cases our daily business life--in other cases our social life--is a blank, so far as religious usefulness is concerned. God gets no revenue from these barren fallow tracts. But the prophet bids us ascertain what they are, and break up the hard, caked surface by ploughshare and spade.

BREAKING UP THE CLOUDS. In his great sermon on this text, Finney exhorts to break up the fallow ground by the payment of neglected debts; the putting aside of evil habits; the righting of old wrongs; the forgiveness of old injuries.

IT IS TIME TO SEEK THE LORD. The days are passing over us so rapidly, and we shall be at the end before we are well aware. "It is high time to awake out of sleep;.., the night is far past, the day is at hand." May not the time past suffice us to have been barren and unfruitful; and shall we not make the best of the time which remains?

HE WILL COME AND RAIN. What a glorious promise! He will come and rain down righteousness. It is parallel to the words of the psalm: "Righteousness hath looked down from heaven." It is certain that righteousness will never spring up in the furrows of our souls unless it has come down to us from the heart of God. In us are only the dark, bare, lifeless clouds, lying open in their need: in Him all that is pure, and holy, and righteous--but God waits to rain it down in plentiful showers.

現今正是尋求耶和華的時候，你們要開墾荒地。 何十12

荒地。在我們心中和生命裡有許多荒地，未曾長出公義。野草繁生覆蓋了那不結果子的廣大土地，又把薊的冠毛種子[註1] 散布到別處的土地上。雨水的澆灌和陽光的照耀都是徒勞。有的場合是在我們日常的職場中 — 另外的情形在我們的社交生活中 — 就著敬虔的效益來說，都是一片空白。神在這些廣闊貧瘠的荒地上得不到收益。但先知吩咐我們查明什麼是這些荒地，並用犁和鋤打碎那結塊的堅硬表土。

開墾這些土地。關於這節經文，芬尼[註2] 有篇很好的講章，他勸人要藉著償還忽略的債務、摒棄壞習慣、糾正過去的錯誤、寬恕從前的傷害，來開墾荒地。

現在正是尋求耶和華的時候。時光飛速流逝，在我們醒悟之前，就要到達終點。「該趁早睡醒的時候；... 黑夜已深，白晝將近。(羅十三11-12)」我們已往荒廢不結果子的時候難道還不夠嗎？我們不應該充分利用餘剩的時間嗎？

祂要臨到並降雨。何等榮耀的應許！祂要臨到並降下公義的雨水(12節)。詩篇裡有相同的話：「公義從天而現。(詩八十五11)」可以肯定的是：公義絕不會在我們心中的犁溝中出現，除非它從神的懷中臨到我們這裡。我們裡面只有黑暗、荒涼、無生命的土塊，在缺乏中赤露敞開；在祂裡面一切都是純潔、神聖、公義的 — 神等待著把這些如豐沛的雨水降下。

[註1] 薊(讀音同「記」)(thistle)為草木植物，其種子(thistledown)因帶冠毛甚輕，隨風飄散。薊花為蘇格蘭的國花。

[註2] 芬尼Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875, 美國基督教會牧師，近代復興運動之父，十年間影響二百萬人歸主。也影響19世紀初美洲大陸的大覺醒運動。

I taught Ephraim to go. Hosea 11 : 3

This is very touching. It is one of the sweetest, tenderest words in the Bible--a metaphor borrowed fresh from the nursery. What an epoch it is in the child's life when it first gets upon its feet! The mother sets it there, or it manages to get up by itself. But it dare not walk; it must be taught to go. Sometimes the mother holds the clothes from behind, or reaches out her hands in front, or hovers around the little hesitating figure with outstretched arms to guard against the first sign of tumbling. The lesson is not learnt all at once. Sometimes many a sad fall tutors the venturesome pupil; but the mother is not discouraged. With a kiss and a "never mind" she puts the little one on its feet again, and teaches it to go.

God is teaching us to go. He holds our hands in his; walks beside us with outstretched arms to see that we do not fall to our entire undoing; catches us when we are about to stumble, and picks us up when we have fallen to our hurt. God is never discouraged, any more than the mother is; and the more weak our anklebones and nervous our gait the more care does He expend.

There are stages beyond this. There is the walk that pleases God; the running, when He has enlarged our heart; the mounting up with the wings of eagles. But at the end of life we come back to the going: I will go unto the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and upon the harp I will praise Thee, O God, my God.

*I have no help but Thine, nor do I need
Another arm save Thine to lean upon!
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;
My strength is in thy might, thy might alone!*

我原教導以法蓮行走。 何十一3

這是非常感人的圖畫。這是聖經裡最甜蜜、最溫柔的話語——借自育嬰室的一個鮮活的比喻。當孩子第一次站起來，這在他的生命中是何等重要的時刻！母親將他放在那裡，或者他自己站起來了。但他還不敢走；他必須被教導行走。有時候母親從孩子後面抓著衣服，或在孩子前面伸出雙手，或伸開雙臂圍繞這猶豫的幼小身子，防止他摔倒。功課不是一次就學會的。有時候許多次不幸的跌倒教導這好冒險的學生；但母親並不氣餒。一個親吻、一句「沒有關係」她又把小孩扶起，並教他行走。

神正在教導我們行走。他握住我們的手；張開雙臂在我們身邊行走，留心不叫我們因跌倒而完全放棄；當我們快要跌倒時抓住我們，當我們跌倒疼痛時把我們抱起來。神從不氣餒，就像母親那樣；而且我們的腳踝骨越脆弱、腳步越緊張，神就投入更多的關照。

在這之外還有許多階段。有討神喜悅的行走；有祂開闊我們心胸的奔跑；有插上鷹的翅膀而上騰。但在生命的盡頭，我們回到行走：我要走到神的祭壇，到我最喜樂的神那裡；神啊，我的神，我要彈琴稱讚你！（詩四十三4）。

除了你，我別無幫助，
除了你的手臂，我別無倚靠！
我的主，有你就夠了，確實夠了；
我的力量在你的大能裡，只在你的大能裡！

By his strength he had power with God. Hosea 12: 3

Jacob's strength lay in his weakness. As long as he seemed strong, and was able to oppose force to force, he failed of the highest blessing; but when the sinew of his thigh shrivelled beneath the angel's touch, and was out of joint; when he was in imminent danger of falling helplessly to the ground--he prevailed, and received the name of Israel the Prince.

THE ELOQUENCE OF TEARS. "He wept." There is no record of these tears in Genesis, but we can well understand that they flowed freely. The entire results of Jacob's life--wife, children, and fortune--were at stake. With one fell sweep, Esau on the morrow might reduce him to the loneliness with which he had passed over Jordan years before. God is touched by tears. He puts them in his bottle. He hears the voice of our weeping, and interprets it.

THE POWER OF PRAYER. "He made supplication." "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me." Remember how the Syro-Phenician mother cast herself at the Saviour's feet, and pleaded for help. The Lord kept her waiting till her prayer had reached a pitch which only delay could have induced, and then turned to her with the assurance that all she had claimed was hers. You may be kept in the attitude of prayer through the long night, but at daybreak you may receive what you sought.

THE STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS. As long as we can stand and hold our own, we fail of our quest. When we are lamed and broken, and unable to do more than cling, we realize God's hidden stores of blessed help. The sick child elicits most of the mother's love. The last-born babe drags down to the level of its tiny mouth its strong and brawny father.

他... 壯年的時候與神較力。 何十二3

雅各的力量存放在他的軟弱中。只要他看起來強壯，而且能夠以暴制暴，他就得不到上好的福分；但當他大腿窩的筋在天使的觸摸下萎縮且脫臼，當他面臨即將跌倒在地的危險時 — 他就獲勝，並得了「以色列」這名，就是「神的王子」的意思(創卅二24-31)。

眼淚的雄辯。「他哭泣。(4節)」在創世記中沒有記這些眼淚，但我們能理解他的眼淚止不住地流出。雅各一生全部成果 — 妻子、兒女、和財產 — 都面臨危險關頭(創卅二11)。第二天以掃只要一次凶猛的掃盪，就可以使雅各變成孤單一人，像多年前他渡過約但河時一樣。神被他的眼淚感動。祂把這些眼淚裝在皮袋裡(詩五十六8)。祂聽到了我們哭泣的聲音，並解讀其中的意思。

禱告的力量。「他懇求。(4節)」「你不給我祝福，我就不容你去。(創卅二26)」你記得那個敘利亞-腓尼基人的母親怎樣撲倒在救主腳前，懇求幫助。主耶穌讓這婦人等待，直到她的祈求達到一個只有遲延才能引到的頂點，然後主轉向她並明確答應她所求的(太十五21-28)。你可能要在漫漫長夜裡一直保持著禱告的態度，而在黎明就可以得到你所求的。

軟弱的力量。只要我們能夠站立，並掌控自己擁有的，我們就不會求告。當我們癱腿、破碎，除了緊抓不放之外不能再做什麼時，我們才認識到神有福幫助的隱藏寶庫。生病的小孩引出最大的母愛。最近才出生的寶寶，將強壯結實的父親拉到他的小嘴邊。

O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction? Hosea 13 : 14 (R.V.)

These words are made familiar to us in the magnificent apostrophe with which Paul's great resurrection chapter closes. They have been recited for centuries over Christian graves.

In their first utterance they record Jehovah's resolve to deliver his people in spite of all their sins. The conflict in the divine heart between hatred of the abominable idolatries by which they were cursed, and his ancient, unalterable love, gives this chapter, and indeed the whole book, its remarkably disjointed character. There is hardly a paragraph which is not marked by abrupt transitions, agitation of speech, appeals, inquiries, expressions of infinite regret. But notwithstanding all, God had given commandment to bless, and He neither could nor would reverse it. Let death and Hades do their worst against his chosen, He was stronger far.

In these intermediate ages these words may be quoted over every Christian's death, whether it be a martyrdom or the quiet yielding up of life. In comparison with the great gain that death brings to those who pass to the "far better" of being with Christ, wherein are we losers by it? Nay, do we not greatly gain?

But the full realization of these words awaits the hour when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, at the sudden appearance of the Saviour in his advent glory. Then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. There shall not a hoof be left behind. Not one of the redeemed shall remain in the prison-house; and even in their bodies, raised in the likeness of Christ, there will be no evidence of the triumph of death or the grave.

死亡啊，你的災害在哪裡呢？陰間哪，你的毀滅在哪裡呢？ 何十三14

這些話我們都很熟悉，保羅在講論復活的偉大篇章時，就用這壯麗的兩句話作結尾(林前十五55)。這兩句話已經在基督徒的墓地被朗誦了許多世紀。

這些話起初是在本章記載耶和華拯救祂子民的決心，儘管他們犯了許多的罪。神心中的衝突介於「恨」那使以色列人受咒詛的可惡崇拜偶像，與祂那古老、堅定不移的「愛」之間；神心中的矛盾，使這一章甚至整本何西阿書，顯得支離破碎。幾乎沒有一個段落不出現突然的轉變、激動的講論、懇求、詢問、無限後悔的話語。但儘管如此，神仍舊賜下命令要祝福，祂不能也不願意撤銷這命令。讓死亡和陰間盡其所能來抵擋祂的選民，祂遠勝過死亡和陰間。

在死亡之後、復活之前的居間時期，這些話可能被引用於每個基督徒的死亡，不管那是殉道或平靜過世。那離世與基督同在「好得無比」的人(腓一23)，死亡給他們帶來極大的益處，對比這極大的益處，我們在哪一點上是失敗者呢？啊，難道死亡不也使我們大得益處嗎？

但這些話的完全應驗，要等到這必朽壞的穿上不朽壞的，這必死的穿上不死的(林前十五53)，就是在救主榮耀降臨突然顯現的時候。那時經上所記「死被得勝吞滅」的話就應驗了(林前十五54, 賽廿五8)。沒有一蹄被留下(出十26)。沒有一個蒙救贖的人留在監獄裡(啟廿1-3, 7)；甚至他們的身體也要復活與基督一樣，再沒有死亡或墳墓得勝的跡象。

I am like a green fir tree. From Me is thy fruit found. Hosea 14: 8

This chapter abounds with picturesque natural imagery. The dew distilling on the parched herbage, as the sign of the Holy Spirit. The blossoming lily, fragile but beautiful, an emblem of the retiring grace and purity of Christian character. The roots of Lebanon, descending far down into the valley, anchoring in its rugged strength, significant of the stability which in each Christian should mingle with grace. The silver beauty of the olive, the cool aromatic breath of the wind that has passed over the snows and slopes of Lebanon, commemorating the beauty and fragrance of the influence of the child of God. The covering shadow, the yellowing corn, the delicious scent of the vine, when it gives a good smell, to denote the gifts and graces of holy living. And finally, all of these summed up in the cry of Ephraim, "I am like a green fir-tree." O child of God, canst thou appropriate this wealth of imagery for thyself? Are the facts which these symbols denote true of thy life? Be not content to be as the lily, seek also to be as the rooted strength of Lebanon; be not satisfied with the similitudes of beauty, seek also those of usefulness. And above all, be an evergreen, never showing signs of autumnal decay.

But, amid it all, remember the caution--"From Me is thy fruit found." Count naught thine own but sin. Thou hast nothing thou didst not receive; thou couldst do nothing apart from Jesus. It is only as thou abidest in Him, and He in thee, that thou canst bring forth any fruit, or be fragrant, or serve any good purpose in the world.

*As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,
So, when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul,
All heaven's own sweetness seems around it thrown.*

我如青翠的松樹，你的果子從我而得。 何十四8

本章有許多美麗的大自然圖畫。露珠在枯乾的草上蒸發，如同聖靈的標記。綻放的百合花，柔弱卻美麗，象徵基督徒謙讓的美德和純潔無暇的特質。黎巴嫩的樹根，深深扎入山谷，用健壯的力量固定下來，表示每個基督徒該與恩典融合而有的穩定。橄欖銀色的美麗，涼爽芬芳的風，吹拂過黎巴嫩的積雪和山坡，記念神兒女影響力的馨香美麗。遮蓋的陰影，金黃的五穀，葡萄甜美的香氣，當美好的氣味發生時，表示聖潔生活的恩賜和恩典。最後，這一切彙集在以法蓮的呼喊中，「我如青翠的松樹。」神的孩子呀，你能為自己取用這圖畫的豐富嗎？這些象徵所表示的事實，是你生命中的實情嗎？不要滿足於像一朵百合花，也要尋求如黎巴嫩的香柏木扎根的力勁；不要滿足於美麗的外表，也要尋求那些有益的事。最重要的是，要作一棵長青樹，絲毫不顯出秋天的衰敗。

但是，在這些中間，記住這個告誡——「你的果子從我而得。」除了罪，不要以為自己有什麼。你沒有什麼不是領受的(林前四7)，離了耶穌，你就不能做什麼。只有當你住在祂裡面，祂也住在你裡面，你才能結果子(約十五5)，才流露芬芳，才能在這世上有美好的服事。

如同在瓦瓶中稀有的香水，
瀰漫著不屬於瓶子的香氣；
這樣當主在一個必死之人心裡，
天上的芳香就要從這人散發出來。