

6.4-6—God Hates Hypocritical Worship

God complains against His unbelieving people, v.4

- I. *What shall I do with you, O Ephraim and O Judah?*
 - A. The Lord takes on the language of a perplexed parent in the face of a rebellious child who refuses to be reformed. Why does the Lord speak in this way?
 1. To show how depraved they were in a course of sin. No matter what the Lord did to reprove them for their sins, they wouldn't budge. They were bent on destroying themselves. The Lord's words are meant to confront them—and us—with the irrational hardness that sin produces in the heart and mind.
 2. To show how just God was in His course of judgments against them.
 3. To show that God had left nothing undone that could've been done to save them from ruin. Yet, they still refused to turn, cf. Isa 5.3-4; Mic 6.3. Like Gomer, they would not be faithful.
 4. To show how averse He was to go to extremes with them. The language suggests a reluctance to land the final, mortal blow. God's not in a quandary here, but it's a tender way of revealing how averse He is to treat us as our sins deserve.
 - II. It wasn't that the people made no response at all to God. They turned to God and sought Him in worship, v.4; 5.6.
 - A. But their love was like a morning cloud with no rain, cf. Rev.3.15; Josh 24.15-23. The Lord despises a hypocritical and duplicitous heart, 5.6, 13; cf. Js 1.7-8; Mk 11.12-14.
 - B. Is it any wonder, then, to hear God complain? The people are wholly incurable, inexcusable, and past hope, Ezk 18.30-32.

God's judgments upon the unbelieving are just, v.5

- I. The Lord uses human language to drive home the point that His judgments are just because the people are bent on sinning.
 - A. God's pictured here as a parent with his back against the wall—not because He is, but because He wanted Israel to understand that they're the kind of children that utterly exasperate their parents.
 - B. And He wanted to make clear that His judgments never fall on any who doesn't deserve it, Ps 51.4; Ezk 18.4.
- II. How did God deal with people bent on sinning? –How will He deal with us if we're bent on abusing His grace with a life of sin?

- A. He hewed them by His prophet's preaching. It's the picture of a miner in the quarry who overcomes the hardness of the stone with blunt tools and hard blows, Jer 23.29. But the problem was, Israel refused to receive God's image. They'd rather break than bend; rather be without God than without their sin, 2.5.
- B. He slew them with the words of His mouth. The Lord's prophets therefore went from threatening judgment to promising judgment. The people hated the prophets always talking about judgment (Jer 38.1-6) but it was because the people were bent on sinning, 11.7.
- C. His judgments will go forth as a light. The Lord had so clearly revealed His will to them that His judgments will be seen to be just and they'll be shown to be inexcusable.

God exposes their hypocrisy in worship, v.6

- I. The Lord anticipates an objection on their part by telling them that they worship God in vain when they refuse to show mercy and love to their neighbors and brethren, 6.8-9; 7.1-2; cf. Mt 9.10-13; 12.1-8; 1Jn 4.20-21.
 - A. All their worship was hypocritical when the love they professed to have for God never translated into a love for their neighbor. True worshipers of God become like God, not only in vertical holiness, but also in horizontal love, mercy, and compassion toward others.
 - B. The Lord rebukes them because their worship of God never served its true purpose, which was to cultivate a sincere love for God and a genuine love toward others, Mt 22.35-40.

Reflections

- I. The Lord hates hypocritical worship.
 - A. It denies the Lord the heart, which is the best part of every man, Pr 23.26; Rev 2.2-5.
 - B. It ignores the true end of all worship, which is conformity to God, Eph 4.11-13; cf. Ps 115.8.
 - C. It's void of the true motivation of all worship, which is love for God, Dt 6.4-13.
 - D. It's barren of the fruit of true worship, which is a life of godly piety toward others, 1Jn 4.19-21; Jn 13.35.
- II. What is *your* worship of God like? Is it sincere, conforming, and fruitful or is it hypocritical and self-centered? Look at how you treat others and you'll have your answer, Isa 1.10-17.