

Hosea 5:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.

Analysis

Shallow repentance insufficient: 'They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.' The Hebrew לֹא יִתְנַהֵן מַעַלְלִיכֶם לְשׁוֹב אֶל-אֱלֹהֵיכֶם (lo yittenu ma'alehem lashuv el-Eloheihem): 'their deeds do not permit them to return to their God.' Sin has created such bondage that repentance becomes impossible apart from divine intervention. The 'spirit of whoredoms' (רוח זנוּנִים, ruach zenunim) indwelling them prevents turning. They lack true knowledge (יְדֻעָה, yada') of YHWH—the intimate covenant relationship necessary for salvation. This teaches total depravity: sin so corrupts that we cannot even repent without grace (Ephesians 2:1-5). Only Spirit-wrought regeneration enables turning to God (John 3:3-8).

Historical Context

Israel's repeated cycles of shallow repentance followed by renewed apostasy demonstrated inability to genuinely turn to God. They performed outward reformation (2 Kings 10:29-31, 13:6, 14:24) while maintaining core idolatry. This pattern continues through Israel's history: reforms that touch behavior without transforming hearts inevitably fail. The phrase 'spirit of whoredoms in the midst of them' suggests demonic bondage or deeply entrenched disposition toward evil. Only the new covenant promise—God writing law on hearts through Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27)—could break this bondage. Church history

similarly shows that external reform movements without spiritual renewal eventually revert to former corruption.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse demonstrate human inability to repent apart from divine grace, and how does this inform our understanding of evangelism?
2. What distinguishes genuine Spirit-wrought repentance from shallow behavioral modification?

Interlinear Text

כִּי אֱלֹהִים מֵעֶלְיוֹן מְלָא לְשׁוֹבֵן אֶל לֹא יְתַנּוּ
H3588 unto their God H3808 They will not frame H5414 H4611 H413 H7725 H430

לֹא יְהִי הָאָתָה בְּקָרְבֵּן כְּנָזְבָּנִים רְוַעַן
H3808 the LORD H3068 H853 H7130 H2183 H7307

יְדָעָה:
of them and they have not known
H3045

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 4:12 (Spirit): My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

Jeremiah 9:24 (References Lord): But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 24:7 (References God): And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

Jeremiah 50:38 (Parallel theme): A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.

John 16:3 (Parallel theme): And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

John 8:55 (Parallel theme): Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

Hosea 4:6 (References God): My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Hosea 4:1 (References God): Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.