



Croatian
Evangelistic
Outreach

Kneza Branimira 11
10000 Zagreb, Croatia
ceo@cce.hr

T+385 1 4920 726
F+385 1 4813 871
www.cce.hr



CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Mario Dučić, CEO Pulpit Series is sent out monthly free of charge. If you would like to be added to our mailing list and receive these messages on a regular basis please send your request to: ceo@cce.hr
March 2007.

"Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land." (Hosea 4:1)

The prophet Hosea, under the King Jeroboam II, speaks to the northern kingdom of Israel. The kingdom grew materially but decayed spiritually. The people of God became greedy and formed relationships with the Canaanites who lived around them, accepting their immoral behavior and idolatry.

They became unfaithful to God, their "Husband" while committing harlotry with Baal and other false gods. Hosea's task was,

as is the task of any godly pastor or spiritual leader, to warn them about their sin. He encouraged them to turn toward God or otherwise suffer the consequences.

Today's Christianity is in a state of crisis. Due to pressure from the world they violate Biblical principles and make decisions that are not in harmony with His will. The gods of this world – money and glory – lead them to new theologies and sinful behavior with the intention of pleasing themselves.

I believe that today God is sending His church the same message, as He did to His people at the time of prophets; He is bringing

★ **Today's Christianity is in a state of crisis.**



a charge against His people because we have all together become outlaws.

When Hosea spoke about “bringing a charge” to the people of the earth, he used the Hebrew word “riv”. This word directs us to a litigation or battle. In other words Hosea says that God is not willing to bless His people any more because there is litigation against them. We have left Him; we do not demonstrate our love to Him any more because of the blessings that have dulled our senses and we are no longer faithful to keep His eternal commands.

“There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed.” (Hosea 4:2)

Due to pride and sin, pastors and spiritual leaders perish one after another; they lose their testimony and leave believers in state of confusion. Yet, on the other hand, believers, because of their self-righteousness, grow

rebellious and cease having a desire for God as they turn passive and worldly. When life takes a bad turn this scenario continues to repeat itself – pastors blame believers and the believers blame their pastors; however neither side is aware of the fact that the time has come to stop rebuking and pointing the finger at each other.

One thing is certain, we are all guilty; we are guilty for our lawless condition. Simply put, we have left God and no longer show our love for Him. I would like to emphasize that when times grow hard you are not in a position to blame others, you have only to look at yourself and your relationship with God.

The priests in Israel pointed out the sins of the people and the people the sins of the priests, yet both sides were to blame for the spiritual crisis in the northern kingdom. *“Now let no man contend, or rebuke another!” (Hosea 4:4).*

Let us examine what has happened and draw a parallel with the condition of the church today

► **1. SPIRITUAL LEADERS LEAD PEOPLE INTO CRIME AND PUNISHMENT BY THEIR BAD EXAMPLES**

“Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother. My people

★ **We have left Him; we do not demonstrate our love to Him any more because of the blessings that have dulled our senses .**

are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity.” (Hosea 4:5-8)

When King Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam and founded the northern kingdom he also set up his own religious system, which opposed the law of God. He set up two golden calves for the people to worship. Furthermore, the priests were not descendants of Aaron. At first the residents of the northern kingdom continued to worship God, yet in a wrong way, but soon they completely turned to the worship of Canaanite gods, replaced God with Baal and neglected God completely. The priests accepted the new system and failed to remain faithful to the teachings of the law. I can see the same situation today. Many go to church and listen to teachings from the Word of God; they are present in body but their hearts do not belong to God; not only they but the teachers as well. They have given their hearts to Baal, the god of this world, who is the god of fertility.

Today money and materialism completely occupy the church, its pastors, and spiritual

workers who work for profit thus nullifying their service for God. God himself said it to Hosea: *“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6)*

Many workers, as in the time of Hosea, are blinded by the beauty of this world. Even though they teach truth the question is whether they live it or not! It is interesting to note how the priests back then were profiting from the sins of the people. When a person brought their sin offering the priest would take a portion of it for himself so that the more a person sinned the more the priest received. However, in the end the priests could not eat all the meat so the rest they either gave to their relatives or sold.

Many priests today profit from sinful lives; rather than leading believers out of sin, they encourage them by not teaching the entire truth. This way they maintain their numbers or even multiply their profit and live a comfortable life based upon it. Today we see that many like to “tickle the ears”; they serve in order to be seen by men or to become popular; the pulpit is only a place to built their selfish ego. Everything can be made spiritual but the

★ One thing is certain, we are all guilty.



fact is that spiritual workers do not live as they should; they are full of lust and compromise as they make their world a “quieter and more comfortable place for living.”

Therefore we now have many so-called “seeker sensitive” churches where the sinners feel good and where they are not asked to change. For many it is more important to have more people at any price because they must somehow finance their extravagant visions and excessive appetites for better cars, bigger houses and fashionable clothing. We see the same situation with contemporary missionaries. In the name of “missions” they spend a lot of money traveling around the world and are at times a greater burden than a blessing to the local churches they are visiting – I call it present-day mission tourism! Nowadays everything is done in the name of Christianity!

What is even worse is that these spiritual workers do not use biblical principles in

★ **Today money and materialism completely occupy the church, its pastors, and spiritual workers who work for profit thus nullifying their service for God.**

making decisions; they excuse their wrong behavior on their personality. Through their rebellious way of life they encourage others around them to live in an undisciplined manner – sin is no longer called sin but “weakness” or a “personality” that should be accepted and understood! The works of flesh are treated as normal. But Apostle Paul said very clearly - *“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

(Galatians 5:19-21)

Unfortunately, they do not think of the consequences on their children. It is sad to read the statistics: many pastor’s children and spiritual workers do not follow God as they should because it is a part of God’s judgment for neglect: *“Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”*

(Hosea 4:6). Today pastors lead children’s ministries but their own children live in rebellion and lead worldly lives – how ironic! Parents, take responsibility for the apostasy of your children - our children and marital relationships are our picture of spirituality!

Due to neglect, priests and pastors have led people into crime and punishment and believers have had to bear it.

▶ **2. THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE HAVE BECOME HARD BECAUSE OF BLESSING THAT HAVE LED THEM TOWARD CRIME AND APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT**

“And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds. For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; “Because they have ceased obeying the LORD. - Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.” (Hosea 4:9-11)

The Israelites were not exempt for their “ignorance”. The main Canaanite gods represented powers of fertility. Their worship included various immoral rituals. Men who came to worship pagan gods had sexual intercourse with temple prostitutes or priests; young women who wanted to get pregnant had sex with priests – and God punished them with barrenness.

Because of blessing, many believers today are hardened; they pay for their sin as the Israelites did when the blessings destroyed and condemned them. *“Israel empties his vine; He brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit He has increased the altars;*

According to the bounty of his land They have embellished his sacred pillars.” (Hosea 10:1)

Present statistics show that many believers view pornography on the Internet. Allegedly at one famous Pentecostal university 95% of the couples divorce and homosexuals openly admitted their affection yet no one will react because of the financial benefit of having the students there. They compromise for the sake of profit. As in Hosea’s time – the immoral spirit rules: *“My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, And they have played the harlot against their God.” (Hosea 4:12)*

All of this hardens the hearts of the people of God and it is no wonder that these self-righteous and sin-bound people cannot become disciples. Even God cannot lead them: *“For Israel is stubborn Like a stubborn calf; Now the LORD will let them forage Like a lamb in open country. ” (Hosea 4:16).*

The people of God lead themselves into crime and consequently into punishment: *“The wind has wrapped her up in its wings, And they shall be ashamed because of their*

★ **Parents, take responsibility for the apostasy of your children.**



sacrifices” (**Hosea 4:19**) In other words, all they have relied upon will not help them; time will show the fruit of their sin and in a moment all they have relied upon will disappear – their titles, degrees, careers, positions; all they have invested in will testify against them.

Another characteristic we see is outward worship, which has no value. Many appear to be righteous but when it comes to making a sacrifice they disappear from the scene. They are ready to sacrifice and cry out to God for a house, a car, fashionable clothes, or new cell phone but immediately after they have received these blessings they become negligent.

*“They did not cry out to Me with their heart When they wailed upon their beds. They assemble together for grain and new wine, They rebel against Me; Though I disciplined and strengthened their arms, Yet they devise evil against Me; They return, but not to the Most High; They are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.” (**Hosea 7:14-16**) “For Israel has forgotten his Maker, And has built temples;*

★ **Nowadays the church pays homage to blessings, not the Giver of the blessings!**

*Judah also has multiplied fortified cities;” (**Hosea 8:14**)*

The more believers have, unfortunately, the more they spend; not for the Kingdom but for their childish unfulfilled wishes! We build grand palaces for ourselves but do not care for the Home of God. We enjoy blessings but forget our Creator. Nowadays the church pays homage to blessings, not the Giver of the blessings! This is the reason why we have less passion and prayer, we want God to bless our ways and our desires; we ask for His protection and providence but do not want to expand His Kingdom because it may require sacrifice – we may have to give up our own ambitions, salaries, or maybe live in places we do not like! Nowadays believers do not want to die to themselves so therefore they bring on themselves well-deserved crime and punishment!

► **3. REDEDICATION TO GOD AND SINCERE LOVE IS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO RESOLVE THE ARGUMENT**

“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.”
(Hosea 11:1-4)

In all these verses Hosea speaks about the love God was showing to His people. God always loved Israel as every parent loves its stubborn child; it is one of the reasons why God does not want to release His people from the consequences of their bad behavior Israel sinned and needed discipline, similar to the rebellious son in Deuteronomy 21 when his parents brought him before the elders. We can see that through Israel's sad history God constantly offered renewal so He could use them.

Church, it is the same with us. He has called us to Himself from our sins and taught us how to walk but with the time we have become ungrateful. He wants us to turn to Him and start believing in Him. He does not want us to blame others, or even Him, for our difficult circumstances or situations because *“For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth..”* **(Hosea 6:1-3)**

When we face consequences for our sin we should be grateful to God and love Him in return for He continually gives

to us and when He disciplines He also heals. We cannot be angry with Him or anyone else. We cannot rely on our own righteousness or capabilities while continuing on with hard hearts and stiff necks. If He does not discipline us who will? *“O Israel, you are destroyed, But your help is from Me?”* **(Hosea 13:9)**

„ O Israel, return to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity; Take words with you, Say to Him, Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, We will not ride on horses, Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘You are our gods.’ For in You the fatherless finds mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, And lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread.” **(Hosea 14:2-7)**

Forgiveness and restoration begin when we become aware of the consequences of sin and the emptiness of living without God. We should ask for forgiveness, as a son asks forgiveness from his father, while at the same time realize that we do not deserve anything.

★ He wants us to turn to Him and start believing in Him.



Arrogance, pride and demanding of our rights are not true repentance!

As the prophet Hosea says, we should “take our words with you”, meaning to give God deep gratitude from our heart, not only with our mouth; turn to Him with full confidence when there is no one behind us, in weakness when nobody understands for this is the place where He will renew us.

God’s glory will be real again. With renewed resolve we will begin bearing fruit. Crime and punishment will disappear: *“His beauty shall be like an olive tree, And his fragrance like Lebanon. 7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; They shall be revived like grain, And grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon... Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them.” (Hosea 14:7-10)*

Although God punished the northern kingdom because the spiritual and political leaders lead the people in righteousness, in 722BC when Judah was robbed, God had His remnant who later returned to their land. There is still hope for those who want to return to God from crime and punishment. Let us stop accusing each other, admit our sins and turn to Him while there is time. Regardless of how wrong we’ve been God is willing to forgive us, draw us back to Him and renew us again: *“I drew them with gentle cords with bands of love.” (Hosea 11.4)*

“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, And lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread.” (Hosea 14.4-6)

★ **God’s glory will be real again.**

All material in this issue is subject to International copyright laws and may not be reproduced without prior written approval. Permission to reproduce may be obtained by writing to Croatian Evangelistic Outreach.

**Copyright © 2007 CEO. All Rights reserved.
Private duplication of this message for friends and neighbors is authorized.**

Gifts within the United States of America designated for this ministry are received by Spirit Life Ministries International, 37 Red Clover Drive, Sandpoint, ID 83864-8805. For tax-deductible receipts, please make checks payable to Spirit Life Ministries International and write **Croatian Evangelistic Outreach** in the memo of your check. Online payments

can be made by Paypal to: slmi@nctv.com Gifts outside of the United States of America can be sent to: Crkva cijelovitog evanđelja, Kneza Branimira 11, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia Bank Name: Raiffeisen Bank Austria D.D. Zagreb, Swift number: RZBHR2XXXX, Account number 2484008-2100013054 IBAN number: HR0824840082100013054. Thank you.