

Turning Our Valley of Achor into a Door of Hope? 14-May-2017

(Hosea 2:14-23 and 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 & Revelation 3:19-20)

G'Day Church Family!

Please have your Bibles opened up to Hosea chapter 2 starting at verse 14.

There's an outline in the bulletin if you would like to take some notes to help you concentrate.

Let me pray first and ask God for his help and guidance

Recap

Before we begin then - let's do a quick recap of the book of Hosea so far...

The prophet Hosea lived in a period of time where the nation of Israel had divided

[Powerpoint 1 - Divided Kingdom/Hosea's ministry]

10 of the 12 tribes had formed the Northern Kingdom - under King Jeroboam II - and this Northern Kingdom retained the name "Israel"

The other 2 remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, formed the Southern Kingdom, and became known as Judah - as Judah is the larger tribe

The King of the Northern Kingdom - King Jeroboam II was a corrupt king - leading his people to worship false gods like Baal - a Canaanite fertility god

Whereas the kings of the Southern Kingdom - Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were pretty much faithful to God - except for King Ahaz

During this time, God told Hosea to go and marry a woman, Gomer, who is promiscuous and will be unfaithful to him

The reason God told Hosea to go and marry a woman who will be unfaithful to Him - is because Hosea's marriage is going to be a picture of what God's marriage to His people is like

[Powerpoint 2-A Picture of God's Marriage]

The people of Israel looking at Hosea's marriage will have a PICTURE of what the marriage relationship between God and his people is like. God is the loving and faithful husband and Israel is the adulterous, idolatrous, unfaithful wife, chasing after other gods like Gomer chases after other men!

The 2 marriages run in parallel!

Intro

Imagine, if you were in a marriage relationship -with someone who was unfaithful to you - and you're doing everything to keep the relationship going and the other person is not interested and chasing after other lovers

There's two possible choices to make:

You, either - put an end to the relationship and give up because there's no hope

Or - because you love them so much - you keep pursuing the relationship - because you have great hopes and expectations for this relationship - it's of the utmost value to you

That's how God feels about His relationship with Israel

God loves them so much - even though they've cheated on him - and even though he's threatened to punish them

[Powerpoint 3-Punishment to win them back]

His punishment is - only to ever - bring them back into a loving relationship with Him - not to get rid of them

So that they will come to their senses - and say to themselves - just as it says in verse 7 of chapter 2:

I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off then now

And now as we come to this week's passage from Hosea chapter 2 verses 14 to 23: God is going to pursue His Beloved Israel - to win them back

And to show that His punishment was merely temporary and that because of His love for them - He will pursue them and offer them hope for the relationship to be restored - hope that they just can't possibly refuse!

So just how will the unfaithful one - Israel - be brought back into a loving relationship with their God?

Well - for God and Israel to be reconciled - it takes 4 steps:

STEP ONE - GOD ALLURES THE UNFAITHFUL ONE (V14)

See v14 - **Step ONE** - the Lord God **allures** the unfaithful

Allure in the original language means - to persuade, seduce, charm -

So God takes His beloved back to the wilderness where she had her first date and He courts her all over again - and speaks to her tenderly

Remember Israel became a nation in the wilderness after God led them out of Egypt - the wilderness was the scene of their first date when they first experienced just how much God loved

[Powerpoint 4-Step 1]

So God allures them - like He's reminding them of their first love!

Famous theologian Charles Spurgeon puts it this way

He says: *"Note how God says He will allure her - This is a singular kind of power: 'I will allure her;' not, 'I will drive her' not even, 'I will draw her,' or, 'I will drag her;' or, 'I will force her.' No, 'I will allure her.' It is a very remarkable word, and it teaches us that the allurements of love surpasses in power all other forces. That is how the devil ruins us; he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like; and the Lord in mercy determines that, in all truthfulness, he will always outbid the devil, and he will win us to himself by fascinations, enticements, and allurements which shall be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer. This is a wonderfully precious word: 'I will allure her.'"*

By reminding them of that first date in the wilderness - God is reminding them that in the wilderness - it was just God and Israel. That's how their marriage began - just the two of them. There was no Baal - no other lovers - to lead them away from God

STEP TWO - GOD OFFERS HOPE (v15)

Having recaptured Israel's attention - by alluring her...

Step **TWO** - is in v15 - **God offers Hope** to the unfaithful one - Israel

What is a hope anyway?

[Powerpoint 5-Step 2]

The dictionary definition for hope is: - [a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen](#)

That's the world's definition of hope.

But the Bible's definition is far superior

Instead of wishing for something to happen, someone who believes in God's promises - KNOWS their hope is rock solid because it is grounded in God's truth - because it is impossible for God to lie (Heb 6:18). So when God promises hope - as He does here in v15 - Israel can be certain it will happen

So what is it He promises here in v15?

[Powerpoint 6-v15-Hope]

Firstly God promises to give back all the vineyards he took away earlier in chapter 2 - that's a picture of God restoring His blessing on them

Secondly - He promises to make the valley of Achor into a door of hope

What does that mean?

Well Achor means trouble

There was a valley in Israel called the valley of Achor - not far from Jericho

It was the scene of great trouble for Israel in Joshua chapter 7 - when God told the Israelites to enter the Promised Land and take the city of Jericho - they were told in Joshua 6:18

18 But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.

But one guy, Achan, didn't listen and took some of the items worshipped by the people of Jericho.

This made God very angry - and caused the Israelites to lose a battle in Ai - a place north of Jericho.

The sin of Achan was discovered - and he was stoned to death - and the place he was stoned was called the Valley of Achor - the Valley of trouble - to remind Israel of the trouble that Achan's sin got them into!

So here in v15 of Hosea chapter 2 - God is promising to change Israel's circumstances - their valley of trouble - the trouble brought on by their sin of faithfulness

Will now be turned into a Door of Hope

God is offering Hope

God's restoration of Israel is so great that He will transform their "valley of trouble" into a "door of hope"

And because God cannot lie - it's a rock solid promise

When Israel is restored, still in v15 - her response will be like it was when God rescued them out of Egypt - when they were a young nation.

This should remind them of the day when Moses and the children of Israel sang a triumphant song at the Red Sea (Exodus 15) when God delivered them safely across the Red Sea.

God is saying here - the way the Israelites sang with joy when I delivered them across the Red Sea - the way they felt - you are going to feel that same joy when I turn your valley of trouble into a door of hope!

With that promised hope - comes step 3

A restored relationship - in verses 16 to 20.

So let's see what the restored relationship between God and Israel looks like...

[Powerpoint 7-Step 3]

STEP 3 - RESTORED RELATIONSHIP (vv16-20)

See V16

With great anticipation, God looks forward to the day when His relationship with His beloved Israel is genuinely restored. He wants an intimate love-relationship with His people - and longs for the day when His people will have a marriage-like love and commitment to their one true God!

And still in v16 - 'they will no longer call Him, Master!'

God was not satisfied with a fear-based relationship where they thought of Him, primarily as their Master, He wanted a relationship where they thought of Him, primarily as their Husband

Then in V17

God will remove the names of the Baals from their lips.

It's like a parent washing their child's mouth out with soap

That's what God's doing here - He's washing their mouth clean of the words they used to worship false gods and Baals.

It was these false gods and Baals that wanted a 'master-slave' relationship with the people. But not God - He wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with His people.

At the same time in V18 - God says He will make a peace treaty with Israel and the animals - and He'll get rid of weapons of war. It's a picture of peace - no more wild beasts and no more fights with bullies! Just safety.

Boy - could we do with that in our world right now!

Then to make the restored relationship complete, in **verses 19 and 20**.

God makes a final promise.

He will betroth (old fashioned word to promise to marry someone - like being engaged - but not likely to be broken)

He will betroth His beloved Israel

And He says it 3 times in v19-20 for emphasis

And it's a **forever marriage** - never to be broken - till death do us part!

And it's a restored relationship built on rock solid foundations

Full of righteousness - justice - love - and compassion

Core ingredients for a perfect marriage!

And because the marriage is restored

The people will acknowledge God!

They'll know God for who He really is

(pause)

Maybe there's another marriage in view here - something to do with Jesus? We'll see...

STEP 4 - RESTORED BLESSINGS (vv21-23)

Which brings us to Step 4

Once the relationship is restored, then **blessings return!**

[Powerpoint 8-Step 4]

See verses 21 to 23

Because the relationship between God and His people is back on track

The people's hearts are beating in rhythm to God's and so what the people want is what God wants. So when they ask - God will respond!

That's the same principle Jesus taught:

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7)

And because God has responded - the earth will respond - see v22

When the relationship is where it's supposed to be, God provides abundantly.

This is the same principle Jesus taught:

³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33)

The Earth responds - in v22

With new wine and olive oil

And the Earth will respond to Jezreel

Remember how Jezreel was one of Hosea's children

And Jezreel meant "God will scatter" - Jezreel was used in a negative sense -

But Jezreel can also be used in a positive sense - like scattering seed - or sowing seed. So what God is promising here is a glorious restoration. Jezreel's fortunes will be reversed - scattering - will now become planting - as God says in v23 - 'I will plant her for myself in the land'

Scattering becomes sowing and planting

But that's not the end of the blessings

The other 2 children in Hosea's marriage also had negative meanings

Lo-Ruhamah - not loved or no mercy

And Lo-Ammi - not my people

But God says in v23 - He will now show love to the one 'not loved'

And he will say to the one called 'not my people' - that 'you are my people'

What a blessing!

And with this - the restoration is complete. They can't help themselves but to respond to God's love - by saying "You are my God!"

There's the 4 steps of Israel's valley of trouble (Achor) becoming the door of Hope!

Application/Response

So how do these 4 steps of turning Israel's valley of trouble - into a door of hope - apply to us - in our lives - in 2017?

Now we've said so far in the book of Hosea that Hosea's marriage to Gomer is a picture of God's marriage to Israel

And we said last week there's a third marriage in view

The Marriage between Jesus (the bridegroom) and us the church, the body of believers (the bride)

The OT ALWAYS points to Jesus!

[Powerpoint 9 -3 marriages]

[Explain the marriages]

So - the same 4 steps that God used to restore His marriage with Israel - apply to us in our marriage relationship with God

[Powerpoint 10-App-Step 1]

- A) Step 1 - Notice it's God doing most of the work in this relationship with Israel and it's the same with US. **God pursues us** - He loves US FIRST -
¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10) and ⁸ But God

demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

God pursues us and takes the initiative!

[Powerpoint 11-App-Step 2

B) Step 2 - He **offers us Hope** - Our NT passage from Rev 3:20 says - Jesus is standing at the door and He's knocking on the door - All we have to do is hear/listen to his voice and open the door (Paul McCartney and Wings - someone's knocking on the door, - do me a favour - open the door and let Him in!)

Jesus is our Door of Hope

You may be someone here this morning who hasn't opened the door to Jesus - and let Him come into your life.

Just like opening a door - lets light in

Opening the door to Jesus - lets the Light of the World - into our life - and takes us out of the darkness of our sin and unfaithfulness to God

Now you might have already opened the door - but you're still not letting Jesus into your life - you're still trying to run your own life your way - and not Jesus way

Our NT passage from 2 Cor 11 - said - We have ONE husband - Jesus

We need to come to Him as a pure and faithful virgin

We shouldn't be tempted by Satan - as we said last week - resist the devil (2 Cor 11:3)

Our relationship to Jesus must be - sincere and pure devotion to Him alone

(2 Cor 11:3)

Don't be tempted by a different Gospel - that says anything but Jesus (2 Cor 11:4)

Once we've accepted Jesus as our door of hope

[Powerpoint 12-App-Step 3

C) Step 3 - **JESUS RESTORES OUR Relationship with God** - Yes, God rebukes and disciplines the ones He loves (Rev 3:19 tells us) - but if we repent and confess our sins - He forgives - and our relationship is restored (1 John 1:9). When was the last time - we laid our sins before God - said sorry - and repented. Jesus died to restore our relationship. The least we can do is say sorry Jesus - and thank you Jesus!

Thank you Jesus for restoring our relationship with God and bringing peace between us and God (Romans 5:10) and allowing that restored relationship to be forever (John 3:16)

A relationship that can only be forever because it relies on Jesus' righteousness - justice - love - and compassion

[Powerpoint 13-App-Step 4

D) Step 4 - We have the **Blessings from this restored relationship** NOW

a. We are God's children - just like Hosea's children - we have been sown into a new relationship - born again into a new life - we have been loved and shown mercy and we are His people

We are part of God's family forever!

b. We are completely restored into a right relationship with God

AND - we have future blessings - it's a forever relationship (2:19) - a relationship that goes beyond this Earth - into Heaven -and we have a marriage supper to attend with Jesus in Heaven one day!

The apostle John had a vision in Revelation 19

And an angel said this to Him in Revelation 19:19

“Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

Conclusion

That's the hope will all have -

God turns our Valleys of Achor - our valley of trouble - into a Door of Hope!

A door which leads to Jesus - and forgiveness and eternal life.

How could we refuse that?

(pause)

Why would God do that?

Because of His wonderful grace in loving us - even when we sin - even though we didn't deserve a 2nd chance - He gave it to us - And He continues to love - because His love never fails! (1 Cor 13:8)

Let's pray...