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The Book of Hosea, A Survey, Part 7

Hosea 2:14-23,

¹⁴ “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.

¹⁵ And there I will give her her vineyards
and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.

And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,
as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁶ “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ ¹⁷ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. ¹⁸ And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens,

and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. ¹⁹ And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰ I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

²¹ “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD,
I will answer the heavens,
and they shall answer the earth,

²² and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and they shall answer Jezreel,

²³ and I will sow her for myself in the land.

And I will have mercy on No Mercy,
and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’;
and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’ ” ¹

Martyrdom of Christian witnessed by New Missionary

Years ago I heard the story of a missionary whose first experience on the mission field was the witnessing of martyrdom. As he looked down into the village from the hill on which he stood, he saw a man being executed yet singing hymns of praise to God. The reality of life in a state of sin and misery hit him like cold water on his face: Why would this tribe seek to kill a man who only sought to bring to them the message of life? Would this be his fate? And if it would be his fate, would he likewise sing hymns of praise to God?

At the time he confided that if he were in that place, he wouldn't be singing praises to God. Rather, he'd be angry or he'd be crying. And yet it wasn't a couple of years later that that missionary too was martyred. And do you know what he did prior to his death? He sang hymns of praise to God!

Moses recorded the plea, “Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his” (Numbers 23:10b)! And such is our desire as servants of Christ, isn't it? We don't want to die as a pagan or an atheist. Rather, we want to cross the river Jordan with our feet firmly planted on the rock of Christ.

And that raises these questions:

- Are you prepared to die?
- Are you prepared to lie on a bed of death with the anticipation that great suffering awaits you?
- Are you prepared to go through persecution, difficulty, or trial?

Hosea 2 was given to a people who were at that moment headed toward severe trial. As a nation in covenant with God theirs was the responsibility to serve the Lord according to His word. If they violated the covenant, then suffering, misery, and cursing would be theirs in abundance (Leviticus

26:14-43; Deuteronomy 28:15). Well as you know, they violated the covenant. Rather than serving the Lord, Israel exchanged the worship of Christ for the worship of Baal.

By the time Hosea was sent to the Northern Kingdom, Israel was worshipping the Baals without apology. Accordingly, God sent Hosea with a strong message of judgment. Recall the first three chapters of the prophecy are a chiasm whose focus is on the judgment that was coming to Israel on account of its apostasy.

A: Hosea 1:2-9: Hosea's Marital Dealings with Gomer conveying a message of judgment

B: Hosea 1:10-2:1: An Oracle Pronouncing Hope

C: Hosea 2:2-13: An Oracle Pronouncing Judgment

B¹: Hosea 2:14-23: An Oracle Pronouncing Hope

A¹: Hosea 3:1-5: Hosea's Marital Dealings with Gomer conveying a message of hope

Yet judgment would not be without the glorious and amazing message of hope, which is the focus of our passage; B¹!

=Habakkuk 3:2: "...in wrath remember mercy!"

Now lest there be any Christian here who thinks that on account of their sin the judgment of this prophecy will rest upon them, let me assure you this prophecy is detailing the national consequences of Israel's rebellion against the Lord, AS A NATION! Individually, they remained the apple of God's eye! And so it is with us. Unless we are placed under formal discipline, the judgments of this book do not directly apply to us.

However, let us not overstate the case. We are all guilty of violating the Covenant of Works which God established with man in Adam at creation. This is where the gospel comes in.

1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."

In Christ the penalty and power of sin have been taken care of, but not its presence. We still reap the wages of sin in our person today! As such though we are forgiven, this world brings with it much by way of pain, suffering, misery, turmoil, tribulation, and distress. So while we no longer anticipate judgment from God on account of the penalty of our sin (Christ bore the curse of the Law), nevertheless we do expect to suffer in this life on account of the presence of sin!

Now when such suffering occurs, what will be your consolation and hope?

The message of Hosea 2:14-23 shows us that consolation and hope: The triumph of grace in the face of personal disaster. Though it was written in response to Israel's national sin, nevertheless it is directly applicable to any and all children of God living in a state of sin and misery. The judgments of this prophecy are distinct to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Yet the words of consolation are applicable to all God's people for these words are nothing less than an extension of the grace and mercy of God which He has lavished upon all His children!

The Valley of Weeping Becomes a Spring, Hosea 2:14-15

Hosea 2:14a, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her...”: first off notice that this verse contains a radical shift in its direction. Look with me at...

Hosea 2:13, “‘And I will punish her for the days of the Baals when she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, and follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,’ declares the Lord.”

Our text, directly referencing Israel’s rejection of God, then commences, “Therefore...” Now what we expect to read is this: “Therefore I will forever forget her!” Yet that is not the case. Though as a nation Israel rejected God, the Lord would not reject the individual! Rather to them God gave a bouquet of promises.

At this moment we must pause and wonder! What an amazing God we serve! While Israel is still forgetting God, running away from Him to Baal, the Lord woes her! Theodore Laetsch wrote this:

Here is the unfathomable mystery of divine grace. Here is mercy such as God alone is capable of. Our sin, our apostasy, our shameful ingratitude, our vile adultery, moves Him to pity, to love us. (Laetsch, 1987 (Reprint of 1956 Edition), p. 32)

Christian, behold the glory of God in Christ! Your sin does not invoke anger in God, but compassion, grace, and mercy. How can we remain in rebellion to such a God as this? With that, notice the first flower in the bouquet of blessing:

Hosea 2:14, “Therefore, behold [that is, you are never going to believe this; far from forgetting my people...], I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness, and speak kindly to her [lit. speak upon her heart].”

This is such a contrast, and yet what a promise! Have you ever wondered why God chose not to bring His people directly to the Promised Land after the Exodus? Instead He brought them into the wilderness, to the base of Mount Sinai, to a place of great suffering! If Israel’s best was in mind, why didn’t God give them paradise? I want to read a verse we ought never to forget.

Exodus 13:17-18a, “Now it came about when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, ‘Lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt.’ Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness...”

Do you understand the significance of the wilderness to Israel (and so, the death bed, the place of suffering, the turmoil and difficulties of this life)? We think of the wilderness as a God-forsaken land of misery and suffering.² Yet don’t miss it, it is there that God incubates the faith of His people. For in this place of suffering the silly temptations of life do not dwell. All we have is God! This no doubt is why when God invited Moses to lead His people from the wilderness to the Promised Land, Moses said this:

Exodus 33:15, "If Thy presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here."

So what was God's response to His wayward people in the day of Hosea? He deigned to bring them back to that time in their lives when their walk with God was most dear. He wooed them to the wilderness! In fact, notice the language. God was going to...

- allure her
- speak kindly to her

Both expressions reflect the language of romance (cf. Exodus 22:16; Genesis 34:3; Ruth 2:13). Do you see the first impulse of grace when it comes to our sin? It is to woe us back and so take us to the place where all we have as believers is God! With that, notice the blessings which are written in the form of a wedding gift.

Hosea 2:15a, "Then I will give her her vineyards from there [the metaphor of "vineyards" denotes the idea of spiritual prosperity], and the valley of Achor [this is a reference to the burial place of Achan who after sinning against God was crushed beneath a pile of rocks. Accordingly from Achan on down to the contemporaries of Hosea, Achor was a name of disgrace! Yet grace radically transforms shame, doesn't it? Notice, the "valley of Achor"- this judgment- would become...] as a door of hope [a portal of hope, anticipation, and so blessing]."

How is it that Israel's judgment could be a portal of hope? How is it that pain, suffering, and want could be a portal to the richest blessings imaginable? Simply stated, through the trials, pain, and sufferings of life God removes the distractions of this world, leaving only Himself at the Christian's side where the Lord suffers along with them! Did you get that?

Christ, God, the Messiah came to this world and was described as someone "acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). How is that? He is God; how could He be anything but filled with joy? Christ came as one "acquainted with grief" because He did not come to this world to be served, but to serve. In the process, do you know what He did? He bore in His own body our troubles, grief, and pain!

Isaiah 53:4a, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried..."

This is why we talk about Christ bearing the weightier side of the crosses we bear! In fact we see this in John 12 where Christ said this:

John 12:27, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour."

Christ came to this world to bear our troubles! In light of this, the Lord exhorted us thus:

John 14:1a, "Let not your heart be troubled [...no longer live in The Valley of Achor!]"

Yes there will be troubles in life; but don't yourself be troubled by life! I am with you at all

times. Accordingly, seek Me, trust Me, believe Me!

It is on account of Christ that “trouble”/Achor can be a portal of hope and anticipation of fellowship with God. For when we are weak, it is then that we are strong (2 Corinthians 12:10b)! Thus in the wilderness what would Israel do? What will we do with our faith fixed firmly on Christ?

Hosea 2:15b, “...she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

Do you remember the joy and rejoicing that accompanied Israel’s redemption from slavery? Are you familiar with the joy and rejoicing that results when a person is delivered from the slavery of sin? This is “our first love” and so the place where God, in all His dealings, deigns to bring His people unto their growth in grace.

This is the first consolation when it comes to the bitter providences of life, yes, hardship and difficulty comes to the child of God. Yet God in His greatness is able to transform these into “portals of hope!” It is what Korah had in mind when he spoke of the child of God passing through the valley of weeping. What does God do?

Psalm 84:5-6a, “Passing through the valley of Baca, [he] make[s] it a spring...”

It is reminiscent of what God did in Samuel’s day with one of the most shameful events in the history of God’s people. Recall in one battle, Israel lost

- A generation of men,
- Their high priests, and
- The Ark of the Covenant. It became known as the Massacre of Ebenezer. (1 Samuel 4)

Yet years later when God singlehandedly delivered Israel from the Philistines, the Lord fought for them while they kept silent (Exodus 14:14), what did God do? Through Samuel He erected a stone memorial which He named, “Ebenezer!” Do you understand the significance of this? No longer would this name be associated with shame and defeat, but victory, hope, and so exaltation! Such a radical transformation is predicted in our text with “the Valley of Achor” (Exodus 14:15)! No longer would it be Israel’s lament, but a portal into the lap of God!

With this we see the amazing grace of God which takes the valley of weeping/Achor and turns it into a spring. William Secker put it this way:

To be impatient with our affliction and patient with our corruption is to be angry with the medicine which heals us and in love with the poison which kills us! Beloved, it is sometimes a mercy to us that God removes outward mercies from us! He never wounds a saint to kill him but to heal him! (Secker, 1660)

Yet not every difficulty and trial finds the child of God singing His praises, does it? Sometimes we

feel wounded. Why is that? Just like with the discipline of a child, our wayward will must be broken before there can be restoration. Thus as we face the fiery furnace, we must do so with a heart that says, "I don't want relief; I want Christ." That is what we find in Psalm 84, which is where I got the title for this main point:

Psalm 84:5-6a, "How blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the highways to Zion! Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a spring..."

When our hope, longing, confidence, and joy in life is Christ, then and only then does the valley of weeping become a spring!

End Notes:

¹ *The Holy Bible : English standard version*. 2001 (Ho 2:14–23). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² And so it is without Christ!

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Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on July 3, 2011. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.