



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## The Book of Hosea, A Survey, Part 8

Hosea 2:14-23,

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

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ <sup>17</sup> For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD,  
I will answer the heavens,  
and they shall answer the earth,  
<sup>22</sup> and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,  
and they shall answer Jezreel,  
<sup>23</sup> 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.’ ”

In Matthew 12, Christ, speaking of the dangers of moralism, said this:

Matthew 12: 43-45, “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find *it*. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

And so it was in the Northern Kingdom of Israel prior to its destruction. Recall, that during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), Israel experienced a revival in the religion of Yahweh. From its start in 931 B.C. the Northern Kingdom never really worshipped the Lord. Yet all that changed when God’s people turned *en masse* to the worship and service of Yahweh in and around 765 B.C.

Yet the “revival” was short-lived, lasting a little short of a decade. In fact by Hosea’s day (753 B.C.), the nation had completely rejected the worship and service of Yahweh, and had given themselves to Baal. Truly, their latter state was far worse than the first.

So God sent Hosea to preach a series of messages announcing the judgment that awaited the nation if they persisted in their rebellion. Yet the judgment was not due to a capricious God moved to jealousy, but a loving Lord moved by compassion. Truly, “...in wrath, God would remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2b)! In fact, the passage before us this morning details the mercies of the Lord, and as such I have titled it, “The Triumph of Grace in the Face of Personal Disaster.”

When we began looking at Hosea 2:14-15 we saw the first consolation given to the child of God facing trial and difficulty was that the desert becomes a spring.

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

And that is exactly what God has done in Christ with trial and difficulty in this life. Outside of Christ, they are serious threats to our well-being. Yet in Christ, they have become a portal of blessing to the believer.

Hose 2:14, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness, and speak kindly to her.”

Though God could have brought Israel to the Promised Land directly after the Exodus, Israel wasn't ready; they couldn't handle the success. Thus, God brought His people to the only place in this life which is free of distraction; the wilderness!

Now as we saw the “wilderness” was/is a place of great suffering and deprivation. Yet when the believer enters into this land with Christ, it has the potential for great blessing.

Hosea 2:15a, “Then I will give her her vineyards from there [a picture of spiritual prosperity], and the valley of Achor as a door of hope...”

The Valley of Achor was synonymous with judgment. It was in this place that Achan was judged on account of his rebellion against God. Yet because Christ took upon himself our judgment, any and all forms of judgment in this life, hurricanes, famine, disaster, floods, etc- now are a “portal of hope/anticipation” for the believer.

You say, “Anticipation of what?”

Understand that when God brings His children to the wilderness, it is not to humiliate or hurt them. But to wean away all distraction so that the believer may have Christ and Christ alone. And what is the result?

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

In other words, she once again will enjoy her first love! She will be as Israel when God brought her into the wilderness where she lived unto the praise and glory of God alone.

Now all of this represents God's first response to His SINNING people! Again, we tend to think of God as this ogre in the heavens looking for any and every opportunity to “get us” when we slip up. Yet behold God's disposition toward you when you sin: it is love, compassion, and a working to refine us that Christ might be our all-in-all! Again 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)

This is the first consolation each of us has as we face the trials and difficulties of life. Here God provides “a portal of anticipation!” What now is it that we anticipate?

### **Intimacy and Communion Deepened**

Notice the second triumph of grace is that intimacy and communion are deepened.

Hosea 2:16, “‘And it will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘That you will call Me Ishi and will no longer call Me Baali.’”

The name “baal” means “master” and so in early times could be used of God- *baali*, “my master.” Truly, He was Israel’s master! Yet in the course of time, as the people God interacted with Canaan following the conquest, Israel discovered that the term was used of one of the primary deities for thunder, lightening, and so fertility — Baal. In fact, they not only discovered that this Canaanite deity was named Baal, but at the time of the writing of Hosea, they had exchanged the worship of Yahweh for the worship of Baal.

So what did God do? Again did He forget His people and so cast them aside? NO! Rather, He brought them to the “wilderness” where He deigned, **SECONDLY**, to transform their relationship with Him. Notice, in this place of suffering not only would Israel’s language change, but so also would their relationship with God.

Hosea 2:16, “‘And it will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘That you will call Me Ishi [lit., “my man,” “my husband”] and will no longer call Me Baali.’”

This passage speaks of an intimacy in their relationship with God which was foreign to God’s people at the time. At this time in Redemptive History the Lord was many things in Israel, but NOT “my husband/my man.” Yet that was and is another purpose of the wilderness- and so pain and suffering, a deepening in our walks with God. David Hubbard put it this way:

What God predicts, even commands, is more than a turning from the use of the name *Baal*... for Yahweh; it is also the gift of a warmer, more intimate name: *my husband*, (my [special] man...). As with the new exodus and conquest, the latter period will outshine the former. The bright tomorrow of *in that day* will see Israel more lovingly related to God than ever before. (Hubbard, 2009 , p. 92)”

And so on account of the grace and mercy of God, the Lord deigned to take His sinning people and (1) NOT punish them, BUT (2) bring them to a place of suffering wherein their walk with God would be transformed! After spending many days in the wilderness suffering under the heavy hand of God, Job entered into the portal of trust/hope, and his walk with God was forever changed

Job 42:5-6, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”

What effect did Job’s suffering have on him? His walk with God was deepened! After spending much time kicking against the goads, Paul entered into the portal of faith/hope and his walk was changed.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10, “Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

Paul entered into the wilderness and there learned to trust Christ which radically transformed his

affections such that he later wrote this:

Philippians 3:8, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.”

Do you see the incredible blessing that the wilderness can be to the child of God? When once we enter into the door of hope, the portal of faith and trust in God, our walks are changed! Peter said the same thing when he wrote this:

1 Peter 1:6-7, “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In fact, we ought not to be surprised that it is in the wilderness that God has placed a “portal of hope,” for it is here that Christ brought about our redemption. Recall:

Hebrews 13:11-13, “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp [that is, the wilderness]. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. [It is in the wilderness that Christ suffered, which is why- not surprisingly- if we want to fellowship with Christ most richly, where must we go? To the wilderness...] Hence, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

Do you see how the New Covenant radically transforms our worldview? Prior to Christ, the wilderness was a barren wasteland. Yet because Christ suffered in the wilderness, it now has become a portal of anticipation of a deep walk with God. This poem gives expression to this:

## The Thorn

I stood a mendicant [a beggar] of God before His royal throne,  
and begged Him for one priceless gift which I could call my own.  
I took the gift from out His hand but as I would depart,  
I cried, “But, Lord, this is a thorn! and it has pierced my heart!  
  This is a strange and hurtful gift which Thou hast given me.”  
He said, “My child, I give good gifts and gave My best to thee.”  
  I took it home, and though at first the cruel thorn hurt sore,  
as long years passed I learned at last to love it more and more.  
I learned He never gives a thorn without this added grace:  
He takes the thorn to pin aside the veil which hides His face.

It is this transformation that God had in mind for His people in Hosea’s day. Now if there were any doubts, notice:

Hosea 2:17, “For [in the wilderness] I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that

they will be mentioned by their names no more.”

In Scripture, the “mouth” is a reflection of the heart (Matthew 15:11; Proverbs 27:19). For God to “take from our mouths the name of Baal” is one and the same as God removing the worship and service of Baal from our hearts! In this regard what specifically is “Baal?” Baal in Bible times was a religion of self, where the worshipper’s wants, desires, needs, pleasures, good, and the like became the focus of life. Accordingly, salvation/sanctification/the wilderness truly involves the removal of the “Baal” from our hearts and so the cultivation of a deeper, purer service of Christ.

Therefore we must learn to embrace the trials and difficulties of life. Truly, they are not enemies of grace, but providences by which God intends to deepen our walks with Him. Solomon gives this exhortation:

Proverbs 3:11, “My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, or loathe His reproof...”

Recall the exhortation of the Hebrew writer:

Hebrews 13:13, “Hence, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

Truly we must not lament or loathe the bitter providence. Rather we must allow them to create in us a hatred for this world and so a greater love and longing for Christ! Yet, how do we do this? In the words of the puritans, we must learn to improve upon our sufferings.

What does this mean? It means that we do not regret them, but rather, like labor pains, we allow them to do their God-intended work, to take our focus from this world and place it on God. Isn’t that what God said in Hosea:

Hosea 2:6-7, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. And she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!’”

Thomas Sherman put it this way:

As it is the duty of God’s children to prepare for affliction before it comes; so it is also their duty to improve affliction when it does come... If we do not prepare for affliction, we shall be surprised by it; and, if we do not improve it we are likely to increase it. He who takes more care to avoid afflictions than to be fitted for them, or is more solicitous to be delivered from them than to be bettered by them, is likely to come soonest into them and to live longest under them! (Sherman, 1860)

Family of God, in a world which seeks to avoid pain at all costs, let us not emulate the worldling. Rather, let us seek in and through all things the fellowship, service, and so the glory of Christ. This truly embodies the role God would have the wilderness to play in our lives, which brings us to a third consolation:

## The Miseries of Life are Transcended

Hosea 2:18, “in that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety.”

If we didn't know their dating, we would have thought that Hosea was borrowing from the language of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel where God made explicit His plan regarding the New Covenant. When the day of consummation arrives the lion would lie down with the Lamb (cf. Isaiah 11:6-10) — picturing the restoration of the created order. This is the first half of Hosea's promise here! And the bow would be broken (cf. Revelation 21:3-4) — there no longer would be warfare/armed conflict. This is the second half of Hosea's promise!

Now this is a significant promise in light of the judgment that was awaiting Israel in the form of Assyria. Remember the promise of Hosea 1:4-5. God informed His people that He was raising up the Assyrians who would devastate the land according to the brutality of Jehu in the Valley of Jezreel when Baalism was wiped from the land in a bloodbath of epic proportions (cf. 2 Kings 9-10)! It was this horrible providence, this wilderness that awaited Israel on account of her national sin! Yet as they were brought into this valley of suffering, look at the text- “in that day” God would renew the covenant with His people in which He once again would remind Israel of the promise of a deliverance from that which their physical suffering could only foreshadow. Yes, Assyria would ravish them, but there was a greater foe in the land that needed to be dealt with.

Yes, the beasts of the field would devour and/or poison their food, but again, there was a greater threat in the land.

What or who was this greater threat? Was and is it not Satan and his army of demons who hold captive every sinner in the fear of death? Was and is it not their poisoning of the gospel with lies and half-truths which has led astray countless souls of men? In the New Covenant, God would vanquish these enemies and so bring His people to a place of safety and security!

Hebrews 2:14-15, “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

So much for the foe. What about His lies?

Revelation 19:20, “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two [along with their lies] were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.” (cf. also Revelation 20:10)

It clearly is this that is in mind in the promise before us. When the child of God is brought into the wilderness, he is brought there with the glorious affirmation that though he is in the fire, ultimately it shall not burn them. Theirs only is a physical and so a temporal affliction. And so their suffering serves as a reminder of what they won't receive on the Last Day. Paul stated it this way:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

- Acts 7 and Stephen! When he stood before the most powerful court in Judaism, that which moved him was the view he had of God's judgment throne. Seeing God in this way by faith enabled him to rise above his temporal trial.
- 2 Kings 6 and Elisha! What was the army of the Arameans when seen in light of the heavenly host that accompanied him?

Grace triumphs in the midst of trial and suffering! Though the Christian is persecuted and mistreated, his soul is not touched, he rises above the miseries of life! As such, in faith He is relieved to know that "weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)!

This should remind us of the hope and confidence of John Chrysostom: He was a godly leader in the fourth-century church and preached so strongly against sin that he offended the unscrupulous Empress Eudoxia as well as many church officials. When summoned before Emperor Arcadius, Chrysostom was threatened in many ways. The first was banishment to which he responded, "Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father's house."

"Then I will slay you," Arcadius said. "Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God," came the answer.

"Your treasures will be confiscated" was the next threat, to which John replied, "Sire, that cannot be, either. My treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal."

"Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left!" was the final, desperate warning. "That you cannot do, either," answered John, "for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.'"

Chrysostom was indeed banished, first to Armenia and then farther away to Pityus on the Black Sea, to which he never arrived because he died on the way. But neither his banishment nor his death disproved or diminished his claims, for not even an emperor can take away from us the promise of God in Christ!

And so it is with us! The passing and momentary trials of life may make us pause and wonder as to why. But let this be for only a moment. Rather, let us see life as God sees it and so behold the Savior who walks with us in the midst of the flames, and so let us embrace the Lord. Let us confess that He is more precious than silver or gold; nothing we desire could compare with Him (cf. Proverbs 3:13-14)!

This is how we "improve upon our sufferings!"



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## **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on July 10, 2011. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.