

Hosea 2

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[0 : 00] Turn your Bibles to Hosea 2. Hosea 2, it's on page to my husband Mark and my best friend Shelley.

You are the most despicable deceitful people I've ever met. I know what you did and I'm disgusted. I've changed the locks, Mark.

I've burnt your clothes and emptied our joint account to pay for this poster. You deserve each other Jenny. That's one way, isn't it, to deal with an affair?

Revenge. There are plenty of examples of that. There's the wife who sells her husband's Porsche on eBay for a pound.

A few years ago, the wife of the Czech Prime Minister, when she discovered on primetime TV that her husband was having an affair with the deputy leader of the Czech Parliament, she decided there and then to become a candidate in the election to run against him.

[1 : 33] And we recognize that scenario, don't we? Betrayal, revenge, public humiliation, scandal. It's the story of the TV drama. It's the story of the reality TV.

And the story of Hosea and Goma has got the same ingredients in it. And we saw that in chapter 1 last week. And Hosea chapter 2 is every bit as shocking as that billboard in Birmingham city centre. But there's a twist. So three things I want you to see. I want you to see that the chapter begins with a desperate plea from a loving husband. And then secondly, we'll see that a door of hope is opened in this relationship.

And then thirdly, a day of restoration is promised. Three things, a desperate plea, a door of hope, a day of restoration. And the chapter begins with a desperate plea. Look at verse 2.

The NIV actually says, rebuke your mother. Rebuke her. The ESV says, plead with her. Plead with your mother.

[2 : 42] Plead with her. For she's not my wife and I am not her husband. That she put away her whoring from her face and her adultery from between her breasts.

And one of the things that you should never do if you're a parent is what? It's to communicate to your spouse through your children. That's always a bad thing to do, isn't it?

Tell your father, dot, dot, dot. Go and tell your mother, dot, dot, dot. And don't do that. Especially when the relationship is a little bit rocky. Tell your mother, you go and tell your father, you know the sort of thing.

It's never a good idea, is it, to draw your children into a conflict with your spouse. And yet it happens all too often. And the children, of course, are the ones to suffer.

But what you find here in chapter two, what follows is something no child should ever have to hear about their mother. Look at verse two again.

[3 : 45] Plead with your mother. Plead. For she's not my wife and I'm not her husband. That she put away her whoring from her face and her adultery from between her breasts.

Lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born and make her like a wilderness and make her like a parched land and kill her with thirst. Upon her children also I will have no mercy because they are children of whoredom.

Imagine you clicked on the BBC webpage and you read that about your parents. Imagine having the details of your parents' marital sex life in the newspaper or exposed on reality TV or some documentary.

It's shocking. The marriage is in serious trouble. The marriage has broken down. They're not speaking to each other. You tell your mother. He's not talking to her and the reason he's not talking to her is because she's not there anymore.

Look at verse five. For their mother has played the whore. She who has conceived them has acted shamefully for she said I will go after my lovers.

[4 : 51] Here's how Eugene Peterson paraphrases it. He says I'm off to see my lovers and they will wine and dine me perfume and adorn me. She's out of there and look what it says in verse 13.

I will punish her for the feast days of the bales when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewellery and went after her lovers and forgot me declares the Lord. Now can you see what's happening here? It's not just one story is it? It's two stories. This isn't just about Hosea and Gomer.

This is the story of God and Israel isn't it? Gomer's faithfulness Gomer's promiscuity epitomizes Israel's apostasy. And that is obvious when you read through the chapter.

You read through the language that is used there. Read through verses 11 to 13. It talks about festivals and new moons and Sabbath days and appointed feasts. We're not here just talking about Gomer.

[5 : 55] We're talking about a whole religious system. This is Israel. You see the Lord has done a pretty good job for Israel. He's got her out of Egypt. He's rescued her from slavery and when it looked like she was going to go out of existence altogether God brought his people out of Egypt and he brought them into Canaan the place where he promised to Abraham the promised land but that was centuries ago and now they're in the land and they need provision and they need plenty and they need provision and plenty and that is exactly what the Canaanite gods promised the Baals.

that's what they offered. It is possible even probable that Gomer was a cult prostitute at one of these shrines. Baal worship involved having sex with prostitutes cult prostitutes.

Now let me just press pause for a moment and before we go on try and apply this in a number of different ways on different levels. We can apply in different directions. So I think we can look at our own society and to the western world for that matter.

A world which owes so much to its Christian past. Medical science, trade unions, the abolition of slavery, the rule of law, freedom of conscience, tolerance, the sense of human significance that brings with it a duty of care and you could go on, you could read Tom Holland's Dominion and it will show you.

We take all those things for granted but they are rooted in Christianity. And so people like Tom Holland have written books and devoted their lives to showing this.

[7 : 40] That we as a country still reap the blessings of that Christianity but we're running away from it as fast as we can. Running away from the God who gave us these things.

In fact what we've done, which is remarkable, is we've used the very blessings that God has given us to run away from him. Donald Gray Barnhouse, he was the pastor of the 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, he put it like this.

He says, he paints this picture, he says, God gave man the trees of the forest and the iron of the ground. And then he will give to man the brains to make an axe from the iron to cut down a tree and fashion it into a cross.

And God will give man the ability to make a hammer and nails, and when man has the cross, the hammer and the nails, he will allow the man to take hold of him. And bring him to that cross, and in so doing, take the sins of mankind upon himself, and make it possible for those who've despised and rejected him to come to him, and to know the joy of sins forgiven, to know the assurance of pardon and eternal life, and enter into the prospect of the hope of glory with him forever.

God can make the wrath of man to please him. And God can take even the wicked deeds of people, and still bring blessing and mercy even to the perpetrators of those things.

[9 : 17] He's absolutely sovereign in the matter of salvation. And when Jesus died, he died to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, but Peter says, you with wicked hands took him and crucified him.

And so we can apply this to ourselves, not just to our society. We cannot escape the fact, you cannot escape the fact, that you've been made by God for God.

The image of God is stamped on you. But we turn from our God, so we turn from our maker to worship other gods, don't we? Augustine calls this concupiscence.

Concupiscence. Concupiscence, however you pronounce it. That's the word he coins. It's an infection. It's a disorder of the desires.

So, you remember in Narnia, if you've read the Narnia stories, C.S. Lewis tells the story about the white witch giving Edmund a magical or enchanted Turkish delight.

[10:31] Do you know that? I don't like Turkish delight, but imagine it's a kind of thing that you like, all right? And Edmund loved Turkish delight. And in that story, the wicked witch gives Edmund some enchanted Turkish delight.

And Edmund says this, he says, anyone who has tasted that Turkish delight would want more and more and if allowed, go on eating more and more of it until they kill themselves. Well, that's Gomer, isn't it?

That's Israel too, chasing after other lovers, craving after other gods, and it's you and it's me. Paul describes it. Paul describes it in the New Testament. He says in Philippians, he says, I've often told you, and I'm telling you again with tears in my eyes, there's many in the church like this, they live as if Jesus had never died.

And they live as enemies of the cross of Christ. And then he goes on to describe what that looks like. And he says their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach. What's he mean by that? He says their glory is their shame and their mind is set on earthly things.

You see, what Paul is saying there, he's saying their God is not the God who made them and created them and stamped his image on them. Their God is not the God who gave his son to redeem them on their cross.

[11:48] Their God is their stomach. That's what we chase after. So we chase after our bodily desires and our passions. And they're not wrong in themselves.

So in the right context, these things are good gifts from God. So the appetite for food and the enjoyment of food is a good thing. The appetite for sex and for companionship, that is a good thing. They are good servants that God has given us. But the problem is the servant has become the master. So Solomon talks about it in Ecclesiastes.

He draws a little cartoon and he says I've seen slaves on horseback while the princes go on foot like slaves. It was meant to be the other way around in Solomon's word.

The king rides on the horse and the servant, the slaves, they're the ones to trudge behind the horse. But Solomon says when I observe life, when I look at human nature, I've seen the slave on the horse and the king, the prince, trudging behind, cap in hand.

[12:57] And that is you and that's me. That's how we live our lives. We're governed by our own passions and our own desires. And instead of those things serving us, they end up controlling us.

We chase after things. We look for happiness and fulfillment in these things which are meant to serve us. We face that problem in society in general.

We're turning our back on the God who made us and gave us so much. And we're running away from him as fast as we can. But we also face it as individuals.

And instead of worshipping him, the God who made us, we chase after gods to give us our sense of significance and security. Wealth, career, relationships, all those kind of things.

things. I've discovered Joy Davidman. She was C.S. Lewis' wife. You might know, well you probably don't know, but she's got a little book on the Ten Commandments which is quite interesting.

[14:06] It's called Smoke on the Mountain. Listen to what she says. She says the real horror of idols is not merely that they give us nothing, but that they take away from us what we have.

the real horror of idols is not merely that they give us nothing, but that they take away from us what we have. Then she gives a couple of examples.

For example, she says the house devours the house proud housewife. The house devours the house proud housewife.

If your God is your home, and if everything has to be absolutely perfect, and you don't have any guests in, certainly not kids in case they dirty the carpets or something, if your house is your God, then you are chasing after it and it will devour you.

She says the office rots the executive with ulcer. Canned entertainment leaves us incapable of entertaining ourselves.

[15:23] If you want to read more than that, Tim Keller has got a brilliant book called Counterfeit Gods. I think we've got it on the bookstore. I don't show you. Perhaps most specifically, I think Hebrews 2 refers not so much generally to society, though I think we can say that.

It applies to ourselves as individuals, but the real application for those of us tonight is for us as Christians, as the church, as God's people. people. Because if you remember, Hosea is God's

prophet, bringing a message from God to God's people.

And in the same way that Israel at this time of Jeroboam II, in the same way that Israel saw the Lord as good for salvation, but not much good for anything else, so do we. He was their saviour.

They knew the song of Moses and the Lamb. They could sing about the Exodus. Yahweh was their saviour. He brought them out of Egypt and into Canaan, but he wasn't very relevant to their everyday life.

And isn't the battle, that's where we go wrong? Worshipping God, singing the hymns on a Sunday, living for the gods of this world the rest of this week.

[16:34] Calling Jesus our saviour, but refusing him access to the rest of our lives, so that when it comes to work, or study, or family, or finances, or the bedroom, Jesus doesn't get a say.

The last thing we do is to find out what Jesus says. We're more influenced by what our friends say, or what the telly tells us, or what the company demands us. And how does God feel about that?

Well, that's why this book is in the Bible. Because you cannot read the book of Hosea without the raw grinding emotion, the jealous, hurting love of a spurned husband for his runaway wife.

And that's what this book is about, and that brings me to the second thing. Because God promises to do something about this. He promises in verse 15, can you see it? To open a door of hope. And it all sounds so hopelessly desperate.

When you listen to the plea of this desperate husband, seems so helpless and hopeless, God says in verse 13, and I will punish her for the rest of the feast days of the Baals, when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewellery and went after other lovers and forgot me, says the Lord.

[17:59] Therefore, behold, I will, I will what? Therefore, behold, I am now going to what? How would you finish that sentence? I'm going to divorce her?

Surely, that's what you expect. Surely, I'm going to start again with someone else. It's the end of the road. But it isn't for Hosea and Gomer.

Verse 14, therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. And we're not expecting that.

Here is what I'm going to do, says Hosea. I'm going to start all over again and I'm going to take it back. I'm going to go back, look at verse 14, I'm going to go back into the wilderness, that's where we had our first date.

Israel was first formed into a nation in the wilderness, that's where God entered into a covenant with his people, I'm going to go back into the wilderness, where we had our first date and I will court her and I will woo her and I will allure her and I will give her bouquets of roses.

[19:11] Matt Chandler, he's an American preacher, he's the leader of the Acts 29 church movement, he's quite a good preacher, don't watch him, he's one of these men who speaks with his hands, he's like an air traffic controller, but he's okay to listen to.

Matt Chandler tells this story of he was sitting next to a lady, she was 26, she was a 26 year old single mum. She was finding life difficult, she was trying to balance raising a child and finishing a degree all on her own.

Matt Chandler says that he and some of her friends began to befriend her and to share the gospel with her. They babysit occasionally to give her a bit of a break and then one day she got invited by one of his friends to what she thought was a concert.

She'd been invited to go and watch her friend playing in a band and she just assumed it was a concert but it was actually a church meeting. And she turned up to this concert and there was a guy up the front preaching.

He said he was going to talk about sex and he took a red rose and he smelt it and he showed it to the crowd and he said look at this. Look how pretty this rose is isn't it?

[20:28] And then he took the rose and he threw it into the auditorium. There were about a thousand people there. And he told them all pass the rose around and smell it. Feel the texture of the petals.

And then he went off as Matt Chandler puts it. He went off on one of the worst most horrific tirades on what sex is and isn't that I've ever sat through. Matt Chandler continues. I'm thinking to myself with this girl whose name was Kim.

I'm thinking to myself with Kim beside me. What are you doing? As the preacher wrapped up he asked this is the culmination of the speech. Where is that rose? Some kid comes down to the

platform and brings the rose back to him.

The preacher holds up the rose and the petals are broken and the rose is kind of damaged and he lifts it up and he holds it for all to see and then he shouts at the top of his voice now who would want this?

Who would want this? Chandler says anger welled up within me and I wanted to say Jesus wants that rose. Jesus wants that rose.

[21 : 35] Jesus wants that rose. That's the whole point of the gospel isn't it? God made him who knew no sin the only one who has the right to condemn us and to criticize us.

God made him who knew no sin sin for us. All our sin, all our uncleanness, all our filthiness, all our rebellion, all our ugliness, all our greed, all our distorted emotions brokenness, all our sin, God took it upon himself.

And God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us. That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Isn't that beautiful? That is the gospel. And that is the difference between moralism and Christianity.

Moralism says pick yourself up, clean yourself up, get yourself together, and God might accept you. But that isn't what the gospel says. The gospel says, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were like Goma, when we were hopeless and helpless and messed up and driven by demons and controlled by our disordered desires, that is when Jesus died for us, by his death on the cross.

[23 : 00] And you and I are given a fresh start and a new beginning. Look at verse 15, what God says there. He says, and there I will give her vineyards and make the valley of Achor a door of hope.

The valley of Achor was the valley that leads from the Jordan Valley to the promised land. And it was in the valley of Achor that Israel had suffered a humiliating defeat.

It's the second place they went to when they entered the promised land. So the first place was Jericho, do you remember that? And the walls came dumbling down, and then full of pride and full of self-confidence they go on to the next place which is Ai.

And there because of Achor's sin, they suffered an humiliating defeat and they were almost wiped out. And do you see what God is saying? God promises to turn the defeat into a victory.

That will make the valley of Achor a door of hope. Notice it's a door. door. You've got to go through a door. Jesus says, I am the door.

[24 : 07] Everyone who has come before me is a thief and a robber, but I am the door. And if anyone enters by me, they will be saved, and they will come in and go out and find pastures.

So let me ask you, have you gone through the door? Have you entered into all that God has for you in Christ? Are you still on the wrong side of the door? Are you still in the valley of Achor?

Are you still in the place of defeat carried away by your desires, by your cravings, into the arms of someone other than Jesus? And God promises you tonight a door of hope.

And then lastly, even beyond and above that, not only does he promise a door of hope in the valley of Achor, in the place of defeat and humiliation, but he promises, do you notice, a day of restoration? Look at verse 16, how it begins, in that day.

Verse 18, on that day. Verse 21, in that day. We talk about the lost tribes, don't we?

[25 : 11] The lost tribes of Israel, and very soon after Hosea's day, the ten tribes are going to be carried away by the Assyrians into oblivion. Is that going to be the end of it?

Is that going to be the end of the story of God's people? No, there's a day coming, look at verse 16. And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me my husband, and no longer will you call me my Baal.

For I will remove from the names of Baal from her mouth, and they shall be remembered my name no more. 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 the war from that land, and I will make you lie down in safety. Verse 21, And in that day I will answer, declares the Lord, and I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth.

The earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for God.

[26 : 20] When you work through 16 to 21, we haven't got time to do that, but there's wave after wave of blessing for God's people. The tide isn't going out, it's coming in. And ultimately, this marriage that's been so pulled apart by sin is going to be restored, never to be broken again.

And this relationship between God and his people, which seems to be on the rocks, ultimately will be restored. And C.S. Lewis, I think, captures this better than anyone else in his essay on the weight of glory.

He says this, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward, and the staggering nature of the rewards promised to us, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. we are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.

We are far too easily pleased. I am the door, Jesus says. If anyone comes in through me, he will be saved, and he will go in and come out, and he will find pasture.

[27 : 53] Let's pray.