

GOD'S EXPOSED HEART

Peter Currie gives us an insight into the love that God has for his people - a love clearly seen in the book of Hosea.

As I read Hosea early last year two sections punched holes through the calloused membrane around my heart. Each touched me deeply and together they give a real insight into the tension in the heart of God.

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her." Hosea 2:14)

"Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them." Hosea 9:15)

The tension of the love and hatred of God towards His chosen drew me into His Word to Hosea. And what I found in Hosea was God's exposed heart.

1. Unbroken Love From A Broken Heart (Hosea 1-3)

God's exposed heart reveals One who passionately pursues His chosen with unbroken love from a broken heart.

Some people will go to enormous lengths to patch up shattered relationships. But nothing matches God's pursuit of His faithless people.

1. Words From A Broken Heart P1-II

God's love isn't silent or passive in rejection. Rather than stepping away from His people, God steps towards them with a multi-media message slamming their faithlessness.

Hosea's family will act out the faithlessness of Israel to her husband. Even the names of his children will be a statement of Israel's situation.

2. 'Me, She Forgot' 2:1-13

Three words sum up the actions and attitudes of Gomer and Israel... 'me, she forgot' 2:13.

Chapter 2 spells out Israel's utter abandonment of the relationship. She's fallen for the lie that God is stingy and tight fisted. Again the people of God fall for the same Satanic trick, that God's holding out on them, that real life is found somewhere else with someone else.

3. Unbroken Love, From A Broken Heart

Chapter 2 also unfolds the stunning love of God in the face of His bride's rejection, disinterest, disdain and hatred. His unbroken love from a broken heart.

He will act harshly (v.3, 6, 9, 10). He will withdraw his blessing, protection and provision - the dark side of the covenant. God says, "You want me out of your life, you find me too demanding, you feel I don't come through for you, then experience what you desire, life without me!".

But God's unbroken love will not fail. Even in withdrawal God's goal is reconciliation (v.7, 15,

23). At the point of powerlessness, at the point of complete exposure and shame, out in the desert, God is active in the lives of His rebellious people (v.14,19-20). The message of the OT was 'I will, I will...', the message of the NT is 'He has, he has!' (Romans 5:8; Eph5:25)

2. Hearts Adrift (Hosea 4-7)

True knowledge of God is an intimacy and integrity anchored in the revelation of God. To get that revelation wrong, is to get God wrong, is to get worship wrong - and that's deadly. 'My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.' God's people were suffering from relationship drift - hearts adrift from their Husband-God. We are alerted to three areas of relationship drift.

1. Unanchored Faith 4:6-9

Arresting the drift in our hearts requires a firm anchor point in God's revelation of him-self through His Word.

2. Entangled Love 5:3-6

Nine times in two chapters Hosea identifies the second cause of drift as a 'spirit of prostitution.' This isn't just a one night stand. This is a heart entangled, sold out to whatever it takes to get whatever it wants. But God won't share His bride!

3. Distorted Worship 6:1-6

What first appears to be a change of heart is rejected by God as a skin deep, token gesture. But God doesn't stand impotently aside as His wife runs off with another. There is another aspect of God's character experienced by those who reject - His faithfulness and love. They will meet God as their predator (5:14,15). He will slash us if that is what it takes to bring us back!

3. Turmoil in the Father's Heart (Hosea 8-11)

A shift of image brings God as our Father into focus. The corruption of our hearts is exposed as God tears open His chest to reveal His Father-heart.

1. God's Father-Heart

Our Father's love overflows as he shows the family snapshots in chapter 11;

- the day the adoption was finalised 11:1
- the day he learnt to walk 11:3
- the day he fell and scraped his knee 11:3

But there's another set of snapshots in this family album 11:2,3. In chapter 8 God rolls the video tape of Israel's;

- i. rejection of His authority 8:4,
- ii. replacement of God with idols 8:~6,
- iii. reliance on other sources of security 3:7-14.

2. Turmoil in the Father's Mean

Here we meet our Father -hurt and offended - a father who owns His anger 'I hated them there' 9:15. Chapters 9-10 detail God's discipline as it will take the form of;

- i. exile 9:3
- ii. barrenness 9:11-14
- iii. destruction 10

The promises made to Abraham are on the verge of rescission. Do you sense the turmoil in the Father's heart? This turmoil intensifies in 11:8-9.

3. The Last Word from a Loving Father

God's last word is a roar! (11:10-11)¹ reckon the roar comes in two parts. The first is the roar from the cross 'It is finished!' the second is the trumpet blast that ushers in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness.

4. Heartfelt Return to the Father (Hosea 12-14)

Return to fellowship with the Father requires exposure of heart, expressed in words of heartfelt admission, confession and acknowledgement of the Lord.

Hosea has been calling the people of his generation, and us, to recognise the chasm that can exist in our fellowship with God. And he calls us home, paving the way with three steps.

1. Accept Responsibility For The Distance 14:1

God has stood in our face and exposed our crooked hearts, but His goal wasn't humiliation, it was always reconciliation. Admission of guilt is crucial in the transaction of forgiveness.

2. Honest Confession 14:2-3

Just as God's words have exposed His heart to us he calls us to expose our heart to him, with words.

3. Return To The Lord

Return to the Lord your God who;

- longs to be a husband to you
- adopted you as His child
- is a jealous God 13:t5
- alone can heal you 14:4
- longs to shower you with the things you long for 14:5-7

A friend has been telling me lately that at a time when people were preoccupied with the spiritual pilgrimage of the believer the Reformers rediscovered justification as the pilgrimage of the heart of God.

There's only one time when God more graphically tears open His chest to expose His heart than here in Hosea. The language of God's Word to Hosea foreshadows the incarnation! The vulnerability unveiled in God's Word to Hosea reveals the God who bleeds when we cut him. The passion of God's Word to Hosea must grab our hearts and the hearts of our hearers.

Bibliography

I found Beeby (ITC), Kidner (BST) and Ogilvie (The Communicator's) all helpful.

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