

A door of hope

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 February 2017

Preacher: Rev. James Macdonald

[0 : 00] If we can turn to the last portion of scripture that we read from Hosea and chapter 2. And reading at verse 14.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from hence and the valley of Acher for a door of hope. And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth and in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Hosea here probably isn't one of the prophets that we hear the most about. But he lived at a very difficult time in the history of Israel.

It was a time that was materially very affluent. But as always very often follows from that, there was a dearth of spiritual darkness in the land.

[1 : 13] And if we had read the first 15 verses here or 14 verses of the chapter there, you can read it yourselves and you can see what a dismal picture it makes for reading.

It's hard to believe that this is the same people that came forth out of the land of Egypt. That God brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.

And they seem to have lost their way completely. And because of that, it is exceedingly dismal.

And God's deep, mysterious dealings with his church in this world.

And he always deals with his church. And I mean by his church, his elect people, his own people. In the realm of providence here.

[2 : 19] And Job himself in his day was trying to describe the bizarreness of providence in his own eyes. He said, there is, he said, a path that no fowl knoweth.

And which the vulture's eye hath not seen. Why? Well, it was the same as wisdom. Because, he said, it is hid from the eyes of all the living, my friend.

That's it. There is the mystery that is hid, my friend. And cannot be poked into or anything extracted from it that is going to be of any benefit to you or to me.

But this deep mystery also proves that God has a purpose for his church. And that he has had from the very beginning.

Through all the winding paths of this life here. The changing providences. The difficulties. And everything. Anybody who is looking for an easy passage through this world.

[3 : 45] As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cannot be. A Christian for real. Because the passage for the Christian.

Is totally opposite. To the passage of this world. That is why we have been turned round.

That is what the word means. Metanoia. Turning round. And repentance. To turn round. God. But the problems.

But the problems, my dear friend. On earth. Clash. So often with the purposes. Of God. We say it ourselves very often.

We say it quite flippantly at times. My ways. Are not your ways. Neither are my thoughts. Your thoughts. Without really giving that an awful lot of time to think about what that means.

[4 : 50] As the heavens are higher than the earth. It isn't a step. Or a little bit. That we can perch on and look over.

As the heavens are higher than the earth. So are my ways higher than your ways. And that puts it into a perspective in such a way.

That we cannot go beyond that. Israel of old. They had to be taught the lesson.

The same as we have to be taught our lesson. From the day that we have been born again. Of the spirit of the Lord. And we have become little children.

To be fed on the milk of the word. That leads us then to the stronger food later on. But central to the teaching.

[5 : 50] Must be. God's own revealed will. God's own revealed will.

That's what we have in the Bible. God's own my friend. And when the Bible doesn't sort something out for us. Then we might as well stop there.

And say. Lord you know. I don't. Because. His revealed will.

Is ours to read. To meditate upon. But his concealed will. We cannot touch that.

Because. The secret things. Belong. To God. The things that are revealed. Belong to us. And to our children.

[6 : 48] But the things. That are concealed. Belong. To God. That is why. The Christian faith.

Is so different. From anything else. Any of. Of the sects. Any of the isms. Any. Anything that is blown about.

Because you can always go. And you can always. Start somewhere. With it. You can always find some person. Who found something.

Or who read something. Or who wrote something. And carry on from there. But in the Christian faith. Is this deep. Mystery.

At the very heart of it. And that is why. It is. It has proved itself. Down through the ages. My friend.

[7 : 42] That that word tonight. Is as efficacious. For our salvation. As it ever was. Before. My friend. The church.

In Hosea's day. Had slackened. Its moorings. My friend. And was drifting. That's what he says there. They were drifting. And they were quite.

Enjoying it. Quite enjoying it. But the result. True result of it. For the church. Was that the church. Was downcast. And depressed. Feeling dejected. That everything else. Seemed to grow.

Except them. They had distant. Themselves. From the truth. No. We cannot.

[8 : 36] Afford. To do that. We have. To keep. The focus. Get the focus. Right. And keep it.

And not allow it. To drift. Under anything else. Because. That's exactly. What happened here. And they found themselves. Backslidden.

They found themselves. Lethargic. They found themselves. With an element. Of apathy. And the word.

That describes it. Is dislocated. My friend. And there's pain. Where there is. Dislocation. Because they had. Distant themselves.

From. The truth. So. You. We. And they. My friend. Possess. A nature.

[9 : 32] That is. Extremely. Difficult. To be. To teach. To teach. We are. Stubborn. And stiff-necked.

People. And it takes. Saving. Grace. From God. My friend. It's. Alien.

To our. Depraved. Nature. That is. Why. Tonight. Those. Who are. In Christ. Here. Say. Oh. To grace. How great. A debtor. Daily.

I'm. Constrained. To be. We dare. Not. Take our. Eyes. Off. Christ.

For. He is. The one. Who said. Draw near. To me. And. There's no. No. No. Object. There's no.

Question. Regarding. What happens.

[10 : 27] Because. He says. I will. Draw near. To you. But you. Have to draw near. To me. Before. I draw near. To you. Now.

You see. The circumstances. That we have. The sore. Providence. My friend. That has hit us here. The many. Questions. That go through.

The mind. That leaves us. Even questioning. God himself. That is the type of people.

That we are. If we are honest. With ourselves. My friend. But that gets us. Nowhere. My friend. God is sovereign.

Thomas Watson. Once said. That. Sin. Puts gravel. In our bread. And wormwood. In our cup.

[11 : 22] To make us. As unpleasant. As possible. For us. Our bread. And our cup. It's not always. Overflowing.

My friend. But the question. That we ask here is. Is there a longing. A spiritual longing. In your heart. Tonight.

My friend. To be restored. To return again. To where you were before. However difficult.

That is. My friend. And I realize. It's extremely difficult. For you. We all feel for you. My friend. All over. Feel for you.

But that doesn't. Excuse us. From. Exercising. Our responsibility. In these things. And that is why. [12:17] That brings us. To the first part here. It is our love. That calls. I will. Allure her. He said. This is God. Coming in.

Now. After he has. He has. Done all the other things. Be cut off. All the things. Before there. He's coming in. Now. To restore them. I will.

Allure her. That's the language. Of love. My friend. Isn't it? When somebody. Has something. That feels. Something. About somebody.

He doesn't. Shout it. On the roads. But he calls. Them aside. And speaks. Gently. Into their ears. See. The Lord. Was not. In the earthquake. He wasn't. In the fire. He wasn't. In the wind. But after that was gone.

[13:13] There was a still. Small. Voice. My friend. And that is the still. Small. Voice. That God. Is calling us to.

Tonight. My friend. Gently. But. Firmly. My friend. As a father.

Pityeth. His children. To draw us. To get the focus. Back. On the son. Of his love. On the Lord. Jesus Christ.

So that we might. See him. High. And lifted. Up. Nothing. Is to play.

Secondary. He's not going to have. Second. Second. Place. With anybody. Doesn't matter who it is. He must have. The preeminence. In our life.

[14:11] My friend. And in that way. He is alluring us. He is. Warn us. Back. To himself. My friend. Israel. Israel.

Had a heart problem. Their hearts. He tells us. Here in chapter 10. Their heart. Was. Divided. Their hearts.

Were. Divided. And because of that. There was a sense. In which. They were serving. Two masters. Two masters.

But Jesus said. You cannot serve. Two masters. You have to love one. And not love the other. And so it goes on.

Their heart. Their heart is divided. They said. In chapter 10. Now. Shall they be found. He shall break down. Their altars. And he shall spoil.

[15:09] Their images. We have no king. Because. We feared not. The Lord. They. They.

Divided. The loyalty. Isaiah. 60. Has something. To say. On this also. Then. Thou shall see.

And flow. Together. That's a beautiful statement. And flow. Together. And. Thine heart.

Shall fear. And be. Enlarged. My friend. Enlarged. Our hearts.

Shrink. From time to time. And I just. Use an illustration. From my own. Personal life. Many. Many. Years ago. The first time. I went off.

[16:07] To sea. And I was. On a ship. Where the food was. Pathetic. And the work was hard. And. All I. Longed for. Was. To get home.

And get a good meal. That would satisfy me. And after. The eight months. That seemed like an eternity. Came to an end.

And I came home. And the food was there. But you know. The truth of the matter. What had happened. I could only. Eat.

One. A plate. Of soup. Because. The. My stomach. Had shrunk. To that size. My friend. Where I was.

Satisfied. With that. Just that. Plate of soup. It took a while. At home. For it. To enlarge again. And that is. My friend.

[17:01] Some. The illustration. That it shows. Our hearts. Can shrink as well. But he says. Not so. But that it might enlarge. And have more room.

For Christ. Less room. For the world. And more room. For his word. In our lives. My friend. Not leaving it. To somebody else. My friend. To do.

But. To do it. Ourselves. There's an awful lot of things. That we can do. Ourselves. For our own good. My friend. And because.

Never be tempted. To set conditions. My friend. As to how. And to where. This can happen. Israel discovered this.

To their cost. He said. I will bring her. Into. The wilderness. Now if you had. Something. About somebody.

[17 : 54] That you cared for. That was the last place. On earth. That you would take them to. Isn't it? To the wilderness. To that desolate place. My friend. To that cold place.

But the God. Who made the green pastures. Made also the wilderness. And their wilderness. Was to be. Their teaching room.

That was to be their classroom. My friend. Because whom the Lord loves. My friend. He will teach. Nobody goes into the wilderness.

Of their own free will. They much prefer to be. In the greener pastures. Because it's a place of isolation. It's a place of stillness.

Isn't it? And that is exactly. What God wanted him. They couldn't hear him. When he was talking to them. Through the prophets. And everything. So he stops the situation.

[18 : 53] Brings them into the wilderness. And then begins. To speak. Kindly to them. To show them. That he is still. God.

My friend. It's a form. Of spiritual surgery. That goes on. In our lives. Daily. As he takes us aside. To teach us something.

That we hadn't. Realised. Or learned before. In a sense. It is a resetting. Of the limb. Again. And that's painful.

Because. What he's doing. Is he's taking away from us. That. Which was. Taking his place.

And his glory. You need to be very. Very careful. When we come to the things of God. That another said. He must increase. But I must.

[19 : 48] Decrease. He said. I must decrease. That is where we are separated. From. From. Jeroboam.

The calf of Samaria. Was their problem. They had. They had stopped. Worshipping God. And they had. Worshipped. The calf. Of Samaria.

And God. Is a jealous God. He is not going to be divided. In these things. He wants. The glory. Of it. And rightly so.

Because. He is the one. Who has done this for us. He is the one. Who has done. You shall have.

He said. He tells us. In the last chapter here. Of this chapter itself. He said. I will heal their black sliding. And then. He said. They shall say.

[20 : 44] The Lord. Yet. I am the Lord. Thy God. From the. From the land. Of Egypt. And thou shalt. Know. Know God. But me.

For there is no. Saviour. But me. No saviour. No salvation. Going to come. From an individual. Whoever it is. My friend.

Doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Who stands here. Is not going to save you. My friend. Salvation. Salvation. Is of the Lord. We can get attached to people.

We can love them. We can love the things about them. And we can be caught up in these things. And rightly so. We have all seen that happen. But we can't.

My friend. Build upon them. For our salvation. Because. Because. Salvation. Is of the Lord. No.

[21 : 42] He said. That they might. Know. His loving. Kindness. Again. But it's also.

My friend. A love. That consoles. That calls. Into the wilderness. There's a reason for that. And the reason is.

That he is going to speak. Nicely to them. Speak sociably to them. Speak spiritually. To them. In that. Operating theatre.

Of that. We call. The wilderness. My friend. To restore us. To restore man. To man. And man to God. First of all. And then.

Man to man. I will speak comfortably. To her. And I will give her. There is as many eyes. In this. Last chapter.

[22 : 37] The second chapter. Of Hosea. There. I don't know how many. I didn't bother. Reading them. But I. Leave it. That to yourselves. Because. There is so many. I will allure.

There is. I will give her. And then he says. I will take away. The name of Baal. I will make a covenant. With her. I will betroth her. And I will hear her.

And I will have mercy. Upon her. And I will say. This to her. No one else. Involved in this. But the head teacher. The teacher.

Our Lord. And our God. God. God. Was to still her heart. In there. In the wilderness. So that he could.

They could hear. The whisper. My friend. The whisper. We live. In a noisy world. My friend. Doesn't matter where you go. Nowadays. Music has to be played.

[23 : 34] Loudly. Around your ears. And everything. Wherever you go. You can hardly hear. The person speaking to you. Because this is the done thing. That God.

Here he says. Wants to speak to them. Just the same. As he stilled the storm. Jesus did. Stilled the storm. And there was a great calm. Afterwards.

A great calm. That's what the Bible tells us. Maybe you require this tonight. Maybe you require. His hand.

To be placed upon the sword. In your heart. The sword. The sword. In your life. That you think. You're never going to get over.

And that is how it is. With anything like that. That comes. And drops us. Of something. That is meaningful. And a treasure. For us. To hear.

[24 : 37] Reassuring you. Fear not. For I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine. How are they going to hear that?

Except. He takes them into the wilderness. He puts them aside. And he speaks comfortably. To them. So many sounds in the world.

And then he says. Then to hear him say. I'm not going to give you. Back. I'm going to restore things. I'm going to give you. Vineyards.

He said. See in chapter. In verse 12. There he said. I will destroy her vineyards. And her fig trees. Whereof she has set. These are my rewards. That my lovers.

Have given me. And I will make them. A forest. And the beast of the fields. Shall eat them. And now he comes. To restore. This. Goodness.

[25 : 41] Because. Their whole world. And their whole lives. Revolved around these things. If that was taken away. Like. Habakkuk's prayer. And then he says.

What. What. What happens. It's not about. Second blessings. It's not. About. Restoring. But. Rather. Restoring.

What they had lost. What they had lost. See. It doesn't take. An awful lot. For us. To go off. Cush. In the nautical.

World. My friend. If. If. The. The gyro compass. Is broken into. 360 degrees. And if. Someone says. To you. You. You steer.

Zero. Nine. Zero. And you decide. To say. That. That. Zero. Nine. One. Is close enough. To it. Just. [26 : 39] One. Little. Degree. What happens. Well. Before. Before. You have. Traveled. Ten miles.

You. Would be. Up to. A mile. Off. The original. Kush. Just. A little. Things. People say. That's just. A little. Sin.

It's only. Just. A little. Thing. It doesn't. Really. Matter. That. Oh. Yes. It does. The one. Who said. Follow. Me. Said. Follow. Me. And. Follow.

Me. Through. Good. Report. Through. Ill. Report. And. To all. The. Difficulties. Of. Life. And. Everything. That. Life. Throws. At. You. Because.

Israel. Had. Become. An. Empty. Vine. If. You. Read. Through. This. The. The. The. A few. Chapters. There. A few. Short. Chapters. Of. It. That's.

[27 : 33] Exactly. What. He. Tells. Us. About. Them. They. Have. Become. An. Empty. Vine. But. Now. No. Samp. No.

Nothing. In. Them. But. It's. To. Be. Restored. Now. On. Condition. On. Condition. That.

They. Say. What. Have. I. Any. More. To. Do. With. Idols. My. Friend. Ephraim. Is. A. Cake. Half. Baked. He. Said. Half.

Baked. What. Have. I. To. Do. Anymore. He. Wants. Them. To. Say. This. He. Wants. That. In. The. Last. Chapter. Of. Of. This. Book. Ephraim. Shall. Say. What. Have. I.

To. Do. Anymore. With. Idols. No. An. Idol. Can. Be. Anything. I. Have. Heard. Them. And. Observed. Them. I.

[28 : 27] Am. Like. A. Green. Filled. Three. From. Me. Is. Thy. Fruit. Found. They.

Need. To. Know. This. I. Need. To. Take. This. On. Board. Christ. Offers. Us. Life. Through. His. Death. And. His. Resurrection.

From. The. Dead. Nothing. In. This. World. Has. Surpassed. That. Whatever. It. Is. The. Death. And. Resurrection. Of. Our. Lord.

And. Savior. Jesus. Christ. To. Our. Blessed. Hope. And. A. Hope. That. No. One. Needs. To. Be. Ashamed. Of. And.

That. Cannot. Be. Removed. From. Whatever. Is. God. Restoring. The. Blessings. My. But. God. [29 : 20] Also. Reviving. The. Hope. Look. At. What. He. Says. He. Goes. Back. With. Them. To. Judges. To. The. Time. When. They. Came. Out. Of. Egypt. And.

When. He. Was. There. At. That. Time. They. They. Fought. That. Was. One. Of. Their. First. Victories. Was. Jericho. And.

Then. They. Sat. Back. And. They. Said. We. Don't. Really. Have. To. Prepare. For. The. Next. One. Which. Was. A. Small. Place. Hey. But. You.

See. What. Happened. To. Them. When. They. Went. There. Without. The. Preparation. Of. God. My. Friend. He. Said. They. Fell. On. Their. Fist. There. And.

They. Couldn't. Understand. Why. But. There. He. Said. Was. Sin. In. The. And.

[30 : 14] Echan. Had. To. To. Be. Sort. It. Out. And. Had. To. Be. Selected. And. As. Family. And. They. Had. To. Be. Stoned. And. So. They.

Dealt. With. It. At. That. Time. And. That. Is. Why. It. Was. Called. The. Valley. Of. Acher. The. Valley. Of. Trouble. Of. Trouble. It.

Was. A. Valley. of rejoicing for them, but it became a valley of trouble and they couldn't see any way out of it. And the only way out of it was that God would come into the situation and they would do exactly what he had said about Echon.

And then he says, move forward. The valley of Echon became a door of hope.

We don't know what went on in the valley, but we know enough that God says this to us here, that it became a door of hope.

[31 : 25] And don't be despondent, my friend, thinking that this is the end of the world for you. I know it's difficult, I know it's sad, I know all about that, my friend, and we are passed through these things ourselves at times.

But there is a hope in the valley when God comes in to bring hope out of a hopeless, seemingly hopeless situation.

Who else but God can do this, my friend? And he says to us, stir up the gift, he says, that is within you, he said. It's not about laying on of hands, it's not about second blessing, third blessing, or whatever, he said, but to stir up the gift that is within you, that he gave you himself, my friend.

And he knows exactly all about that. He knows how it gets covered over, and we quench it so often. And he is the one who could and who can still do this open, a door of hope.

Are you saying, I can't go on? I don't feel like coming to church anymore. You see, that's from the wiles of the devil, and you have to be on your guard against that.

[32 : 52] He wouldn't want to see anybody in the church tonight, and nobody. But you, my friend, must, you are a people of faith, my friend.

Your faith in him. No amount of doubt, Abraham said, made him wafer against all the odds that he was found on his way through life regarding the promises of God, he said.

But it's also, lastly, it is, it's a call that comforts.

And he says, they shall sing, he said. And they shall sing like the day that they came out of Egypt. You remember that? At the Red Sea, they rejoiced, and Moses rejoiced with them.

And however impossible you see this situation, God can make the impossible possible, my friend.

[34 : 05] Either that, or I wouldn't be standing here tonight. See, they have seemed to have lost the will to sing, my friend.

They're like those who are sitting at the rivers of Babylon, you see. Oh, how they sighed, how they cried when they remembered Zion, how things were, my friend.

God doesn't ask them to sing their song. God asks them, us to sing his song. His song. The new song, my friend. The song he taught us to sing, my friend.

Has the world and its difficulties, has it broken this reed, or has it bruised this reed in your heart? I'm sure it has, my friend.

But a bruised reed, he shall not break, my friend. Or quench the smoking flax. You have that in God's word for you.

[35 : 17] that is the result of accepting the word. That was a great benefit.

See, worship was no longer, after that, it wasn't a duty, something they had to do, but something they wanted to do, my friend. Because of, of what has been here as well, you're duty bound to do

this, my friend, to worship the Lord.

In the beauty of holiness, my friend. Beauty of holiness. Because before that, they had reduced it to our ritual, my friend. That's all it was, our ritual.

the feast days, the new moons, the Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts, he said. He doesn't recommend them at all, because they had lost the power of godliness, my friend.

And our worship mustn't lose the power of godliness, because it's all about God, my friend. it's all about Christ, my friend.

[36 : 28] It's not about us, my friend. It's all about Christ. I like that, my friend. It wasn't difficult for them when they understood that.

Because it was God himself who had brought them aside, who had taught them this, my friend. Who had given them their vineyards back, he said. And as we sung there in the 51st Psalm, restore unto me.

He doesn't say, restore unto me your salvation. No. Because God doesn't restore salvation once a person is justified.

He is justified forever, regardless of situation or circumstances. It was the joy of their salvation that they had lost, my friend.

the joy of their salvation. The salvation was there, it was in there, it was sure. But the joy of it had gone.

[37 : 37] And they wanted restored and the psalmist said, turn us again, O Lord of hosts. Cause thy face to shine upon us. from now on, he said, the Lord, he said, will be the center of it.

Because he is the center of the covenant of grace, my friend. That is, so that our worship and our life is all God, my friend.

All God. maybe you are here tonight, my friend, and the string on your bow is slack.

And God wants it, my friend. It's not, it's of very little use, my friend. It doesn't produce the note that God is looking for. He needs a higher note than that from it, from the instrument, so that he tightens it and tightens it in such a way, my friend, until the tuner hears the one note that he wants to hear.

That's it. Because it won't be complete without that. It might be comfortable to leave it slack, but it's not right until it's at the right tone for the toner, my friend, for the toner.

[39 : 06] And circumstances do that for us so that we, a dear, are a people who understand that God calls us.

I will betroth thee unto me forever. Is that something that you can take apart? No. No.

But there were those that he said that their works would follow them and there were others that he said they would be scarcely saved as they would be saved but as through fire.

They would have nothing to present to God afterwards. And that is why he loves his church, that is why he loves his children, that is why he is looking for us to respond to him positively, positively, and get the focus onto him again so that we can sing that song again in our heart and know that God is the Lord.

It's not what this man will do or what that other man will do. What is that unto you, he said? You follow me. It's not even a building, my friend.

[40 : 32] It's follow me. That's what he says. God is everywhere, my friend. The same God is everywhere. There's no place where God isn't in that sense.

It is to experience him where he is. When the psalmist said, Whom have I in the heavens, Lord, but thee alone? And on earth besides thee, there is none, he said.

There is none. And that is why I leave you with this, with the five links, the unbreakable links that you know yourselves, that in the foreknowledge of God, my friend, God, the predestination of God, the calling of God, the justifying of God, and the glorifying of God.

That chain might slacken, but it can never break. You would have to break God first before that could be broken. broken. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He can choose him to be your friend or your foe. thing. But he did that, he said, so that you be conformed to the image of his son.

[42 : 03] And his son went all the way to die and rise again and go back to heaven and send what he said he would send, the Holy Spirit, into his church.

And he said it will build my church, he said, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

However much they try, they cannot prevail against it.

I think I probably have said enough for you to be, and I will, we will conclude by