

THE FATHER'S LOVE

Condensed version of the fourth and final sermon by Dr Nat Schluter of the Johannesburg Bible College, covering Chapters 11 to 14 of the Old Testament book of Hosea

Rather like the Reader's Digest condensed versions of great novels, the summaries of Dr Schluter's sermons, which appear on this website do not come close to capturing the effectiveness of the live versions. If you have found your interest stimulated and are not a regular attender at the Ferndale Bible Chapel (FBC) in Ferndale (Corner York & Dover Streets, Ferndale, Randburg), why not join us at a Sunday evening meeting (17:55) and listen to the Word of God brought alive by our variety of great speakers? You would be most welcome.

OUTLINE OF SERMON

The following is an outline of the final sermon that was presented by Dr Schluter.

1. **Although painful – the Father loves his wayward son (11:1-4; 12:2-5,9; 13:4)**
 - Intense emotions: of love
 - Intense emotions: of pain

2. **The Father appeals for a wholehearted return (14:1-3; 11:8-11)**
 - Return with words of confession
 - Return with words of praise
 - Return from old ways – relying on Assyria
 - Return from old ways – from idolatry

3. **The Father promises a wonderful future (14:4-8; 13:14)**
 - There is an assurance of new freshness
 - There is an assurance of a new stability
 - There is an assurance of new vigour

INTRODUCTION

Home is such a powerful word. It's a word that can fill your heart, make you smile, make you cry. It does not matter how old you are, how independent you may be, or how much you've achieved. That one word touches some of the deepest places in the human heart – home.

It's interesting that it seems to be a universal longing in all of us to have somewhere we call home. But it's a longing that no home on this earth can fully satisfy. Indeed, many

homes on earth are simply places of heartache, places where the closest relationships are under the greatest strain.

From the earlier chapters of Hosea, which dealt with a marriage, we moved to a court room.....and then to a battlefield and now, in chapters 11 to 24, to a home and to a father's love for his son.

There are three things which the Lord would have us grasp from these chapters. These Nat dealt with as follows:

1. **ALTHOUGH PAINFUL – THE FATHER LOVES HIS WAYWARD SON**

In verses 1 to 4 of Hosea 11, we read of the intense emotional love which God expresses for Israel. And in other places in these chapters it appears as if God is hankering after the days when Israel was young.

And yet, like there is for so many today, there is also present the intense emotion of pain. For Israel has become wayward.

In Chapters 4 to 6, the extent of Israel's sin is defined by way of a series of metaphors. Now, again, we read how...

he has lied and been unruly and violent (11: 12-12:1)

he's run after other nations (12:1)

he cheats in business (12:7)

he's proud of his wealth (12:8)

he is guilty of lavish idol worship (13:1)

his children have even been offered as human sacrifices (13:2)

As it would do any parent, this behaviour angers God and we have a sense of his coming wrath...

swords will flash in their cities (11:6)

they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears (13:3)

I will come upon them like a lion (13:7)

you are destroyed, Oh Israel, because you are against me (13:9)

So, we have the feeling that this anger of God will result in banishment, destruction and utter humiliation for Israel. And yet, with God, there is a deep longing to have his Son back :

11:8. *"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim?"*

(Deuteronomy 29 tells us that these were both cities destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah). My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. 9. I will not carry out my fierce anger nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God and not man – the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath. 10. They will follow the Lord; He will roar like a lion. When He roars, His children will come trembling from the west. 11. They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes' declares the Lord" (Hosea 11: 8-11).

This brings us to the second point that the Lord will have us understand from this portion of his scripture.

2. **THE FATHER APPEALS FOR A WHOLEHEARTED RETURN**

In chapter 12 verse 6, the Lord pleads:

"But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always".

There are four parts to God's appeal to Israel.....four parts to the Father's appeal to you and I as we seek to return to the Lord and draw close to Him:

1. Return with words – words of confession. Come into His presence and confess your sins. Name them before God in all transparency and honesty, without reservation, without excuses.

As we find in 1 John : if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is just and righteous and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

2. Return with words – of praise. Magnify His name. As we find in Hebrews 13, verse 15 : Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess His name.
3. Return from old ways. Return from relying on Assyria, return from the fighting talk of going to war, return from human politics to the promises of God.
4. Return from old ways – from idolatry. Say no more 'Our gods' to what our hands have made. There is one God. Give your worship to Him and to Him alone.

KEY VERSE

Hosea 14 : 3b ".....For in you the fatherless find compassion".

3 **THE FATHER PROMISES A WONDERFUL FUTURE**

There is both a longing for a return, and the assurance of a warm welcome, with wide open arms, of a loving Father and the promise of a great future. It is not a case of second best, there is no holding grudges. In Christ He has dealt with all

His anger. In fact, God's people can look forward to healing and wholeness, splendour and thriving.

Hosea, who has used such powerful metaphors to describe sin and judgement, in the end uses the power of metaphors to describe the new life God holds out to them who return to Him.

14 :

- 4 "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them; 5. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; 6. His young shoots will grow. His splendour will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon; 7. Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the corn. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon; 8. Oh Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him, I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me."

This is what the Lord promises: an assurance of a wonderful future, as we walk closer with Him: nothing stifling, nothing constricting, just grace, and love and freedom.

This is the heart of God the Father: a pain-filled love for His wayward child; a plea for him to return; and a promise of a wonderful future.

APPLICATIONS

There are two applications that present themselves:

1. Some may want to ring a son or daughter and say "I know you have turned your back on everything we have ever believed but our home is your home and the door is always open to you. We love you."
2. Others may hear in the words of Hosea's final chapters an urging to return home, maybe after a time of running away or keeping God at arm's length.