

Series Title: At the Crossroad: From false beliefs to Freedom

Sermon Title: Week 2: The trap of pain avoidance

Date: 10-13-19

- **Two weeks ago we kicked off “At the Crossroads”... from false beliefs to freedom. Iceberg illustration- God calls to us “Let me take you below the surface of your behaviors, go down beneath your emotions and thought patterns, and get to your HEART. To what you really, functionally, believe to be true.**
- **We will never fully experience transformation in our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors if we don’t let God take us there.... THIS LEADS TO...**

† **Reality!** We can’t self-diagnose the issues of our heart. Transformation requires REVELATION, and revelation is a work of the SPIRIT.

- **As followers of Christ, people who have been brought from DEATH TO LIFE, we are not alone in this journey of discovering and addressing the false beliefs- that hold us in bondage to distorted thoughts, unhealthy emotions, and negative/destructive behaviors.**
- **THE GOOD NEWS is that the Spirit is at work to lead us through this process, as we take the step of trust and surrender to the work God wants to do. Want to start with several key Biblical ways the spirit works...**

• The Holy Spirit INTERCEDES

- **Hard for us to really grasp this, but scripture tells us that the Spirit of God, who dwells within us, in union with us, who truly knows us... is praying for us... interceding on our behalf, to the Father.**

Romans 8:26-27 *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*

- **Why significant? Couldn’t be more significant... when we are deeply wrestling with the issues of our heart, it is so easy to feel alone. BUT WE ARE NOT. God is there, he is alongside us, he is at work. We will go into this much deeper in the coming weeks, but for now... you are not alone... and when you start to look at the events in your past that formed your false beliefs, you were not alone then, either.**

• The Holy Spirit CONVICTS

Psalms 139:23-24 *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

- **One of the most important roles of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us our unhealthy... our sin.. NOW, this makes us nervous... it’s easy to have mistaken understanding about how God goes about this.**
- **PETE: Think of Spirit as ‘heavenly speed trap’...**
- **NO... spirit is with us always, opening our eyes, opening our heart... to what needs to change! To what is holding us, those around us, in bondage.**
- **KEY TRUTH! Conviction of HS is never about punishment, but about freedom. There are consequences to our actions in this life, but the work of the Spirit is to set us free.**

• The Holy Spirit ENCOURAGES. He is our ADVOCATE

John 14:16-17 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

- **‘Paraklete’... encourager, helper, one who comes alongside... HE IS OUR ADVOCATE.**

– **HEAR! God is not only with us, he is FOR US.**

• The Holy Spirit **REVEALS** what is **TRUE**

John 14:26-27 *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

- **When our eyes are opened to the TRUE BELIEFS that will dispel and set us free from the false beliefs... that is work of the spirit.**
- **ALL OF THESE WORKS OF THE SPIRIT JOIN TOGETHER to lead us into true transformation. OUR PART is to TRUST. TO surrender. To really lay down our guard and let God do his work... Significant that Jesus ended his thought about the spirit by reminding us that HE IS TRUSTWORTHY! When we let the Spirit work, there is a result... Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**

- **Do not be afraid. No accident that one of Jesus' most consistent sayings was 'FEAR NOT'. Because fear lies at the heart of many of the false beliefs that can take root in our heart, and the FIRST may be the most common.... FEAR OF PAIN.**

† **False belief #1: Pain is BAD, I need to protect myself from experiencing it.**

- **Why do we fear pain? Because it hurts! Not just physical pain, but even more, the pain of rejection, shame, failure, betrayal...**
- **So many of us come to the conclusion that pain is the problem, and if pain is the problem, then the solution is to find ways to minimize, or avoid, pain!**

† The trap of pain avoidance. What is your strategy?

• FOOD • STUFF • ENTERTAINMENT /**distraction** • Self- MEDICATION • Counterfeit LOVE/**pornography, abusive relationships** • AVOIDANCE- **ignore the problem** • SARCASM- **get a little to close... just crack a joke, move on.** • WORK/avoidance • RELIGION • CONTROL • ANGER

- **When we get trapped in our cycles of pain avoidance, it keeps us from HEARING the Spirit, who is working to use our pain to REVEAL TO US our un-health.**
- **WE KNOW THIS, at least in our head... Pain, both physical and emotional, is the result of something deeper going on, that needs attention.**
- **WHAT WE DO as Christians, as good religious people, is ask God to take away our pain. Good intentioned people may step in and try to help someone stop their pain, and in doing so subvert the healing process that God wants to do.**
- **IMPORTANT.... AS A PASTOR... When we are wrestling with pain in our lives, or seeing it in the lives of others, we need to ask God for great WISDOM in how we respond to what is happening.**
- **PEOPLE in great pain because of illness, something that happened to them out of their control, injustice done to you. GOD DOESN'T INFLICT UNJUST PAIN TO BEAT US INTO SUBMISSION. Much of the pain in our world is the result of the fall, that our world is devastated by impacts of sin. BUT regardless of where our pain comes from, he desires to use our pain to lead us into the deeper healing of our emotion, thoughts, that can lead us to freedom.**
- **The reality is STILL that God isn't interested in just numbing us, but healing us... and when we have pain that does not go away, of being present to us....**
- **One of the great stories in scripture about gift....**

† God's gift of pain and the story of Gomer

- **Hosea/prophet- God used his life as a picture of God's relationship with Israel, also of us. TAKE WIFE... prostitute- Gomer. She was sure to be unfaithful, betray, reject... In this story, Hosea plays the role of God, while we are Gomer.**
- **SO, Gomer does what we would expect. She's not happy in the marriage, and she leaves, seeking to meet her needs in other ways. But everywhere she goes, she has great problems... and speaking through Hosea, God reveals what he is doing...**

Hosea 2:6-7 *Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. ⁷ She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'*

- **Gomer's life is tragic, and we see her trying to cover her pain by seeking other loves... counterfeit loves.. rather than returning to Hosea who truly will love and accept her.**
- **But God doesn't let her... everywhere she goes, she cannot find what she seeks, until eventually, in desperation, she returns to Hosea... PRINCIPLE....**

• God loves you too much to let you continually get away with your pain relief strategies!

- **If you have a pain, or sin, fear... that you are doing everything you can to avoid, and those efforts are failing... the person subverting those efforts just might be God.**
- **NOW, we might expect Hosea to treat Gomer harshly when she returned.. here we see heart of God to us...**

Hosea 2:14-16 *Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.*

- **'Achor'... trouble. Her pain she is trying to avoid, when she lets me walk her through it... hope and freedom.... HERE God speaks about Israel..**

There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. ¹⁶ "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master' "

- **Result of trusting God with our deepest pain leads not to rejection, but to intimacy, compassion**

• The pain God allows (or sends) in our lives is always a doorway into HOPE.

- **Later in Hosea we find God speaking about Israel as an infant afraid to be born....**

Hosea 13:13-14 *Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he doesn't have the sense to come out of the womb.*

- **Cycle of OT... Israel faced with crisis, afraid to trust God... To follow God, we must allow God to lead us through the pain of growing! AND THEN...**

¹⁴ *"I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?"*

Pain may seem like the experience of DEATH, but God is the God of RESURRECTION.

- **For some of you, the false belief holding you captive is fear of a pain you've buried... avoiding... God invites you to trust him, to recognize the TRUTH**

† TRUTH! Pain is actually one of God's most important GIFTS

1 Peter 4:12-13 **Great passage, go study! Want to end with...**

Psalm 139:23-24 *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any pain I am hiding, avoiding..., and lead me in the way everlasting*