

## God Makes a New Beginning

✦ **Melody from misery (vv.14-16)**

✦ **Forever faithful blessings (vv.14,19f)**

In the name of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, dearly beloved of God,

One of the greatest blessings of Christian marriage, Hollywood will never have a clue. Their lie enters our homes by high speed Internet as if we need faster folly. Marriage is rarely mentioned except for violent men with beautiful wives who never do anything wrong except marry them in the first place. If the abused can get a gun, violence is excused. “True love” is only outside of marriage in what used to be called “fornication” and “adultery.” And we get as used to this as hills on the streets of St. Paul.

In ancient Israel they didn’t need TV’s. Pornography was on every hillside and under every spreading tree. The Israelites were as deep into Baal worship as Americans into movies. They could no more escape than we could go a week without advertisements. It got so bad that the prophet Hosea was given a very dirty assignment. What a strange way **God Makes a New Beginning** and brings...

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You know how we have Children’s Lessons? God used Hosea as an object lesson for His children of Israel. Some may remember from Bible Class how Hosea was told by God to marry a whore. After they had two children, Gomer went back to her prostitution. In God’s Law through Moses, Gomer could have been stoned to death for adultery. Instead, God commanded Hosea to pay the fee and get her back. Since God sets the rules, He can tell His prophets whatever He wishes. His main goal is to get through with the Gospel. God wanted to give His wayward wife Israel **Melody from misery**.

Stranger than Hollywood is how hard it is for us to see our face in this mirror. Just ask yourself whether anything excites you more than going to church to worship God. Does anything crowd out your love for God sitting here trying to listen? You’ve broken the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandments. As God sees it, whatever has your heart, that is your Baal, your false god, your secret idolatry. If you enjoy movies as much as I, do you have trouble getting your Bible Class preparation finished with your heart fully engaged? Or do you have to exercise self-discipline to get enough rest to get up for Bible Class?

Do we need to go further down this road? Would cameras in your living room show the same kind of **misery** Hollywood can’t seem to escape? If we’re honest, wouldn’t we all have to admit that our relationships in and out of marriage are a negative image of what we’re supposed to be with God? Maybe someone isn’t as patient with me as I’d like, but if I know that, why can’t I be as patient and loving as I’m supposed to be? Is the **misery** in my heart really worse than the **misery** I’ve left in others.

Pardon another movie illustration, but we had to watch one called *Misery* at a pastors’ conference years ago. We were warned it would be “dark humor.” James Caan plays a famous writer rescued from a car accident and nursed back to health by Kathy Bates’ obsessive fan character. Only after he’s all better, she can’t let him go and brutally imprisons him in her home. Once again the best our humanistic entertainment industry can do is show death and destruction as the only way to escape **misery**.

In sharp contrast look at how God rescues us from the prison of sin and back to His loving heart. First He promises this shattering judgment against Israel: *“So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands....I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot,” declares the LORD.* (2:10,13 NIV) Then immediately, He comes back with what can only be the logic of true love: *“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of*

*hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’”*

The *Valley of Achor* was famous for a pile of rocks that buried a man named Achan. He stole some of the booty of Jericho that was entirely dedicated to the LORD. By the LORD’s command Achan and his entire family including the animals were stoned to death and burned. Then the LORD gave Israel victory over Canaan. Now the LORD says He will make that valley of violence into a *“door of hope.”* There His people will sing with joy as when they left the desert behind to enter the well watered pastures of the Promised Land. Centuries later in Hosea’s time, Israel has sunk so deep into Baal worship they call the LORD, “My Baal,” *my master*. But God’s solution is to get very soft in order to open the spirit of His wayward wife Israel. Through His alluring love she will learn a whole new relationship like a loyal wife calls her caring husband, “My man.” Only God could bring beautiful **Melody from misery**. Do you realize how unique this is? It’s not found anywhere but the Bible. **God Makes a New Beginning** with...

### ✦ **Forever faithful blessings (vv.14,19f)**

Sometimes husbands and wives have to wonder, “If only we could keep on loving steady and strong all the time.” And every Christian can’t help asking, “Why must I go through so much pain to grow in my relationship with God?” It’s the sort of question we ask in the dead of winter when we can’t remember how good it feels to sit by the lake in the sun. Who can remember how sweet and natural love is between husband and wife, when you’re suffering real life problems? Likewise, we take for granted God’s love until He leads us through our own desert. So He did for the Israelites *“to humble and to test them,”* so that *“in the end it might go well”* with them (Deuteronomy 8:2,16). Another *“desert”* lay ahead beyond Hosea in the Babylonian Captivity that engulfed Israel for gross, unrepentant idolatry.

God leads us into hardship and difficulty to help us learn to know His love by experience and give us **Forever faithful blessings**. Otherwise, all this is just theory. I personally wish there were some other way. I don’t like to see any of you go through trouble and heartache. And I certainly don’t enjoy it myself. But how else could we learn that there are absolutely no exceptions? *“All things work together for good to them that love God to them that are called according to His purpose.”* (Romans 8:28 KJV)

*God knows full well when times of gladness Shall be the needful thing for thee.  
When He has tried thy soul with sadness And from all guile has found thee free,  
He comes to thee all unaware And makes thee own His loving care. (TLH 518:4)*

When we feel the LORD’s loving arms around us once again, we nestle our hearts and souls in His warm embrace. He never left us. He never will. Even when we forsake Him, His grace keeps working day and night through trials and tribulations to bring us back better than ever. So great is His enduring, endearing love for us. And the more pitiful, miserable we are, the greater His winsome love appears.

It is strange that the LORD loved us in the first place in spite of the way we prostituted ourselves by loving things and people more than God. After all that He still wants us back for a marriage made in heaven. *“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.”* You’re like a woman who could never get anything right at work until a secret admirer started filling out all the forms and making great business deals while giving her credit. And when she messed up so bad she should have been fired, he took the blame. That’s God’s substitutionary *righteousness* hard at work for us in the life of Christ, suffering our blame under God’s *justice* on the cross. Now God’s *justice* is on our side.

Faithful *love and compassion* make you want to spend *forever* getting to know Him completely. No matter how bad you sinned or wandered far away, **God Makes a New Beginning**. One of the greatest things about our God is how He works His love to draw us to each other. Hollywood doesn’t have a clue. But in Christian marriage you can fall in love a million times, each one better than the last. Thanks to His hard work and determination, we enjoy **Forever faithful blessings** as **God Makes a New Beginning**. Don’t you just love Him for that? That’s all He wants as we learn to love one another. Amen.