

"God's Undeserving Love"

Hosea 2-3

There are a few commands that we read in the Bible that we want to obey but we're not always certain how practically. For example:

1 Pet. 1:15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

What does it mean to be holy? Or those commands that say grow in godliness? Peter says here God is holy so be more like God. In what way? Judge impartially like God. You're not God so fear Him since you're a sinner that needed saving by the blood of Jesus. Anyone who doesn't know God is living an empty way of life, so we need to help them see the impartiality and fairness of God who paid the price for their sins by sending Jesus. Okay, I'm getting it but how do I show God's impartial love to those around me when I'm not treated well? How do I act godly or holy then? I think Hosea helps us grow in godlikeness.

We sometimes think the prophets are all judgment, gloom and doom. Prophets (like Hosea) do contain some judgment because God's people were not obeying Him, following the idols of their day. Yet, Hosea is mostly about the love of God. How God loves Israel so much He will not let them go in spite of their constant spiritual adultery. Which, God wanted Hosea himself to portray by loving his adulterous wife Gomer, the way God loves His people.

Hosea spoke God's words primarily to the northern Kingdom of Israel. After Solomon died, a civil war ensued and the two Southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin) split from the 10 Northern tribes. The Southern kingdom kings were descendants of David, ruled from Jerusalem, used the temple for worship and many followed God (most not finishing well) but a few did not follow God. The northern kings were not descendants of David, did not follow God and worshipped idols.

Hosea's ministry would have encompassed Jeroboam II's entire reign. Jeroboam II did not follow God, but he did make life better for Israel in the north. Except that they worshipped golden calves or Baal or Ashterah, false gods of their day crediting them with the good life they were enjoying. Forgetting that God was behind all their blessings. But God is the true God who said in Deuteronomy if you obey Me I will bless you and your land but if you disobey Me I will curse the land and ultimately send you into exile. This is the consistent message of all the prophets and Hosea's message will be a repeated 3-part message;

- there's sin you need to address and here it is.
- God's Word says judgement is coming if you don't repent (Deut 28).
- But (Deut 30) God will not leave you in your sinfulness; He will restore you and bring you back.

The Book of Hosea is God's message of love and hope to His people in that, He loves us too much to do nothing about our sin. Hosea's message shows us the amazing character of God as illustrated through Hosea's love for his adulterous wife Gomer. Hosea was told by God to marry a harlot and love her as a witness to God's continual love for His wayward covenant people, who claim to know Him but pursued worldly wealth, status and the acceptance of others over God.

As Hosea obeys God, Gomer gives birth to three children, and he gives them the names which God tells him. These names are all prophetic in that they illustrate what God will do should His people not repent. Jezreel (son # 1) is a place where Jeroboam's great grandfather Jehu murdered Jehoahaz and Ahaziah (Israel's kings at the time), which fittingly becomes the place where God will end Jeroboam's kingly line.

Gomer's second child, a girl is named 'Lo-ruhamah' which means no mercy, for God's mercy will eventually run out on the Northern (and Southern) Kingdoms. Gomer's third child, another boy whose name is to be Lo-ami which means 'not my people'. God would eventually send both the north and the south into exile but only for a short time V. 10-11 continues with future hope of reconciliation & restoration,

Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.' ¹¹ *The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited, and they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.*

These verses point forward even beyond Israel's return to their land in 536 BC to a future day when the Anointed One, Jesus Himself returns and establishes Israel's kingdom on earth after He defeats Israel's enemies once for all in a future battle at Jezreel (also known as Megiddo).

The message of hope for Israel continues in 2:1 (remember chapter divisions are manmade) as God says through Hosea,

"Say of your brothers, 'My people,' and of your sisters, 'My loved one.'

God will warn of future judgment in the verses that follow but why does He do that? Why does He point out what His people will ultimately be even if temporarily He will express His displeasure at their sinfulness? Because

God Graciously Delays Judgment **(2:1-7)**

When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God said He would pass by Moses and reveal to him His goodness, saying,

Ex. 34:6 *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."*

God is totally good so He can't not judge sin, yet He graciously delays judging so people will repent of their sin, wickedness and rebellion which He says I will forgive. John 3:16 is a gracious warning that whoever believes on Jesus will not perish but have everlasting life. If God is so harsh, why are any of us still here?

Why does He listen to all the foul language that permeates our culture and His Name being used a swear word left and right? Why does He not burst into creation every time someone goes 'Oh what a beautiful creation', acknowledging the beauty but not the Creator?

He graciously warns Israel through Hosea's warning to Gomer,

² *"Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.*

³ *Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born; I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst.*

⁴ *I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery.*

⁵ *Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.'*

⁶ *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.'*

Hosea calls upon his children to tell their mother she needs to repent otherwise Hosea can legally and publically expose Gomer as the harlot that she was. Yet this is grace because Hosea has every right to have her put to death according to the Law. He chooses not to. This the point God is making to Israel. Your sins are obvious. Repent or I will shame you publicly. Which God does, knowing He is making Himself look bad since these are His people.

Gomer sadly says that her lovers were her providers. Food and water speak of basic sustenance. Wool and flax, clothing. Oil and drink, income and enjoyment. In the analogy to Israel, they were thanking Baal for providing all the blessings God had provided. So what does God do? He sets roadblocks in her path so she can't sin or can't enjoy her sin.

Heb. 11:25 tells us Moses chose to be mistreated for God as he identifies with God's people rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. Sin wouldn't be tempting if it didn't have some enjoyment to it. But whatever it is, it's here and gone. Then what? It leaves you empty and unsatisfying. This is the grace of God again. God loves us so much He can interfere with our desire to sin, so that we will rethink what we're about to do and return to God. Who does satisfy us. Why? Because He made us and wired us to be satisfied with eternal things not temporal things. Which is what Gomer decides to do in v.7. Not that she's repented but because she's not having her needs met. Which,

Is God's Way of Giving Us Time to See His Hand in our Life **(2:8-13)**

Gomer, like Israel, still refuses to see how God has blessed her/them.

⁸ *She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold— which they used for Baal.*

⁹ *"Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her naked body.*

¹⁰ *So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands.*

¹¹ *I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals.*

¹² *I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers; I will make them a thicket, and wild animals will devour them.*

¹³ 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.

Again, Gomer is the word picture for Israel. 'Grain, new wine and oil' is repeated over and over in the Old Testament as God's covenant blessings for His people. Grain, new wine and oil is a way of saying I will bless all your needs [Grain = eat; new wine = drink; oil = olive oil, source of income) and more if you obey him. But if you persist in disobeying Me, I will take them away. Why? Because the blessings God has given them they have gone and worshipped Baal with them, saying he gave it to them and pray he will give them more.

We can see that God is referring to Israel more than Gomer because He says He will take away her holy days and let wild animals ruin her crops. How? Exile. God will take them away from their land, leaving it mostly barren and in a foreign country they will not have the freedom to worship as they had. And v.13 God clearly declares when His people give His blessings more attention than Himself, we are committing spiritual adultery. We see this in the New Testament also:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

How about us? What blessings of God have we given more attention to than God Himself? What unconfessed sins do we need to repent of? Has God been trying to get our attention putting roadblocks that are preventing our sin? What will it take for us to return to God? God is graciously waiting but won't wait forever. Why? He wants what's best for us. Which is

God Passionately Wants to Bless us With Himself **(2:14-23)**

How?

By reminding us of our past salvation (vv.14-15)

¹⁴ "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. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.

God will use the exile as another 'wilderness' experience so that Israel will return to God. That's how God saved them from Egypt by bringing them into the wilderness. While their God preserved them for 40 years until they were ready. Even then they almost blew it. How? God miraculously gave them Jericho but Achan sinned by taking some of the banned loot. Israel was badly defeated by Ai. Joshua cried out to God, 'Why?' God says because there is sin in the camp. Deal with it. Which they did. Achan was stoned to death in the valley of Achor. Once Israel's sin was dealt with, they could move forward. The death of the one saved everyone.

How did we come into a covenant relationship with God? Believing that the death of one, Jesus, pays the penalty for our sins. When we realized we needed Christ, God saved us and began to work in us, making us more like Himself because that is the greatest blessing in the world. So we too need to remind of ourselves of our own salvation. As well, meditate on

Our glorious future (vv.16-23)

"In that day" is one of the prophet's favourite phrases pointing Israel to their future hope; the complete fulfilment of God's promises to Israel regarding them as a nation living in their land under the Messiah's rule. This has yet to happen completely. God did bring them back from exile but they had no Davidic king and they have yet to have complete governance over themselves. Always under Gentile powers control or influence. But "in that day" (v.16) their relationship with God will be whole (promised in Zech. 13; Rom. 11:25). "In that day" there will be peace in the land and between people (v.18), the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant when Jesus rules on this earth for 1000 years. A time when the land will yield its fruit constantly (vv.22-23) because God's relationship with His people will be healed.

V.21 is quoted by Peter in 1 Pet. 2:9-10 when he writes of us, Christ's body,

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

People have misunderstood Peter's use of these Old Testament phrases and said that Israel is replaced by the church. That God has divorced Israel and switched them with us. That's not what Hosea says here. These verses are yet to be fulfilled. You have to spiritualize a lot of these land and government verses into generalizations for that to fit. Plus then God obviously lied in Jer. 31 when He said that of the sun and the moon stop coming out then only then will His words about Israel not come true. And then Jesus' words about coming to fulfil all God's Words in Matt. 5:17-21 are misleading. As Paul shows us in Rom. 11, Gentile believers are grafted into Israel's true tree. God in His grace includes us too.

God is gracious again. Keep remembering what He saved us from and what we have to look forward to not just on this earth but on the new earth as well. If we have so much to look forward to, why would we not want to grow in godliness?

Look what Hosea does next in 3:1-5, He buys back his wife from the slave market, whose harlotry has landed her there. She is no longer wanted, except by the One who actually loves her:

***3** The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." ² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. ³ Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you."*

⁴ For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. ⁵ Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

Hosea does a very hard but Godlike thing to do, he takes his unfaithful wife back. One who has gone after other lovers and paid the price for it. The only hope for her restoration is the one who

is in a covenant relationship with her. So we see the analogy to Israel and God again. God will take His people back. And it's going to be rough for awhile (v.4; exile resulting in no king, no proper worship) but afterward they will return and seek the Lord and the Messiah and experience the blessings of the last days.

If we want to grow in godlikeness, we too must

Obey God by Doing Hard Things **(3:1-5)**

Forgive those who've hurt us. Restore relationships to those who don't deserve it. Love and accept those close to us who have rejected our grace and kindness. That's what it means to be holy, to be like God and His Son Jesus, who God is conforming us more to be each day. When we let Him. And we'll allow Him to do that the more we appreciate the sacrifice He made for us and meditate on the future He is making for us as we speak.

Father, godliness and holiness seem so far from us some days. Forgive us for our own spiritual adulteries, for worshipping the things you've made more than yourself. For enjoying the pleasures of sin more than our relationship with you. We can't grow in holiness and godlikeness if we don't confess and repent of those sins first.

And Father, like yourself we have been hurt by others. Yet for us not to forgive and seek reconciliation is to forget that You are willing to receive us back every time we have damaged our relationship with you. Your Spirit dwells in us which means your power to forgive and restore are available to us. We are never holy than when we treat others with the same grace You've treated us.

Thanks You for the words of Hosea, challenging us to return to you if that's where we are today or to help others be restored to You as we forgive them for the ways they've hurt You and us. Help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Your Son Jesus.

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