

The March Of Unfaithfulness & The Joy Of Redemption

Hosea 1:3-2:1

This Week's Prayer
Requests:

Memory Verse: "I will love You, O Lord, my strength," Psalm 18:1

Text: Hosea 1:3 - 2:1 - ³ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. ⁴ Then the LORD said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, For in a little *while* I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. ⁵ It shall come to pass in that day That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel." ⁶ And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then *God* said to him: "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away. ⁷ Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the LORD their God, And will not save them by bow, Nor by sword or battle, By horses or horsemen." ⁸ Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. ⁹ Then *God* said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you *are* not My people, And I will not be your *God*. ¹⁰ " Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You *are* not My people,' *There* it shall be said to them, 'You *are* sons of the living God.' ¹¹ Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel Shall be gathered together, And appoint for themselves one head; And they shall come up out of the land, For great *will be* the day of Jezreel! Say to your brethren, 'My people,' And to your sisters, 'Mercy *is shown*.'

Monday

Why is it important to speak plainly to people about the consequences of their sin against God?

C.S. Lewis tells the story of how he once went to hear a young preacher deliver a sermon. With great earnestness the young man ended his message saying, "And now, my friends, if you do not believe these truths, there may be for you grave eschatological consequences." Lewis later visited the young minister and asked him about his conclusion saying, "Did you mean that they would be in danger of hell?" "Why, yes," said the young man. "Then why in the world didn't you say so!?" Lewis replied.

Unlike this young man who was struggling with his own nerves or the fear of man, or some such thing, the prophets of old had no such struggle as they spoke for God. They did not mince words. They did not beat around the bush. They did not try and soften their message to make it more palatable to their audience. Neither did they feel it

necessary to make some sort of apology for God's word. All of these things would have been inconsistent with God's calling and love.

Hosea begins his prophecy on a very hard and somber note. You will remember that God had told him to take to himself a wife with a heart of "harlotry," who would soon break Hosea's heart and leave him, all to symbolize God's own relationship to the nation of Israel. As He said in verse 2, "For the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord." Therefore God presents for us in the marriage of Hosea and Gomer the pain and desolation of spiritual unfaithfulness to Himself. Then in the subsequent birth and naming of Gomer's children He reveals to us the terrible end to this march of unfaithfulness, namely separation from God.

After this, however, something extraordinary happens. God turns the situation around in verses 10 and following and shows the people that this end does not have to be there end, because redemption and joy are possible. The message of this passage for us then is simply this: Reject unfaithfulness, turn from it, and embrace God's redemption. Why should we be faithful to God and embrace the redemption that He provides? The Spirit gives us six reasons for doing so in this passage of Scripture:

What is the potential significance of Gomer's name, both positive and negative?

1. Unfaithfulness leads to barren captivity (vv. 3-5).

Verses 3 says, "So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son."

The name "Gomer" probably comes from the verb "Gamar" which means positively "to complete or finish" and negatively "to cease or fail" as in the abrupt and seemingly permanent termination of something. Her name then can serve as a kind of dual prophecy for the nation, in the same way that Jezreel's can. You will also notice from this verse that it says, "bore him a son" indicating that the child was Hosea's. This is specifically dropped from the description of the next two children, indicating that they belonged to other men.

Verses 4 & 5 continue, "Then the Lord said to him: Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel. In the Valley of Jezreel"

What is the significance of Jezreel?

The name “Jezreel” negatively means “to scatter.” Positively it means “to sow” as in scattering seed to sow crops and reap a harvest. In this verse the word is being used negatively to indicate that God is going to Scatter Israel among the nations in judgment, that is, not the fruitful scattering of seed, but barren captivity in other lands.

The “bloodshed of Jezreel” refers to the execution of Ahab’s house by Jehu in that place. It was not wrong in the sense that the act was carried out, because Jehu was ordered to do so by God, Himself, but it was wicked by reason of the motives that Jehu held in his heart when he performed the deed. That he was moved by evil and selfish motives is evident from 2 Kings 10:29, 31. This kind of obedience from Jehu as a matter of form and pretense with a heart far from God is emblematic of the entire nation’s relationship to God and thus he serves as an appropriate symbol.

Why do I use the word “barren” and what is it’s relationship to the word “Jezreel”?

The “valley of Jezreel” refers to the name of the valley that was on the northern side of the city of Jezreel in Issachar. Here the kings of Israel had a palace and here their court often resided. It was a great battlefield and here Assyria conquered Israel in 722 B.C. and scattered them into captivity among the nations, fulfilling this word and further proving the authenticity of Hosea as a true prophet of God.

What is the lesson here for us then? That if we are personally unfaithful to God, we too will be broken and led into captivity, not by Assyrians, but by an even worse oppressor: sin. As Romans 6:16 tells us “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or obedience leading to righteousness.”

How does slavery to sin make one barren?

How can unfaithfulness to God lead a person into captivity? What are some examples?

Tuesday

Another reason for rejecting unfaithfulness and embracing God's plan for redemption is this:

2. Unfaithfulness leads to untempered justice (vv. 6-7).

Verses 6-7 says, "And she conceived again and bore a daughter. The God said to him: 'Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen.'"

Ruhamah refers to a tender compassion and concern, such as parents have for their small children. Lo means a complete negation of all such compassion and concern. In other words, God was going to bring justice upon the nation for their unfaithfulness and it would not be lessened or mitigated in any way. The southern kingdom however would be rescued without any human hands or means, so that they would know without a doubt that it was God who had done it. This happened literally, of course. When the Assyrians were done scattering and destroying Israel, they went south to Jerusalem. After king Hezekiah's prayer, God sent an angel that slaughtered one hundred and eighty five thousand Assyrian soldiers in a single night (Is. 37:36). But Israel had no such intervention on its behalf.

And yet, did Israel have any legitimate complaint against God that He made this distinction or that He sold them into the hand of Assyria? Why or why not?

Sometimes people make the statement, "I just want God to be fair" or "I just want justice from God." Is that really such a good thing to ask for? Is it fairness that we want from God or something else? Why?

Since God is unfailingly just, how is it possible for Him to satisfy His justice and yet still show mercy to some sinners, like Hezekiah and Judah?

Another reason that we see for rejecting unfaithfulness and embracing God's redemption is given in verses 8-9. Namely:

3. Unfaithfulness leads to separation from God (vv. 8-9).

These verses reveal a simply frightening judgment: “Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then God said: ‘Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people, and I will not be your God.’”

As the child was not Hosea's child, neither would the nation of Israel be the children of God. They were cut off from Him, separated.

What are the temporal consequences of being separated from God? By temporal, I mean in this life.

Harkening back to the opening illustration for this lesson, what are the grave “eschatological consequences” (i.e. where you will be after you die) for unfaithfulness to God. Consider 2 Thess. 1:9 in giving your answer.

Wednesday

Is anything too hard for God? What is God able to do with seemingly “bad events”?

After the devastating statements and judgments in verses 1-9, we come to verse 10 and discover a frankly stunning reversal with regard to the nation of Israel. God says:

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!”

Here God takes the name “Jezreel” and uses a play on words to tell us something important. He tells us that the “scattering” of verses 4 and 5, was really a kind of “sowing” which will one day result in a great “gathering together,” a final wonderful harvest of the people. Thus we see that God will work even through judgment, seeming hopelessness, despair, and even the sin and shamefulness of men to accomplish something mighty and wonderful.

What does the term “redemption” mean?

Time and time again we see God accomplishing this in Scripture: Solomon and the line of the Messiah are established through the union of David and Bathsheba; The Gospel is spread mightily through the stoning of Stephen and persecution of the church; The payment for sin and salvation is accomplished through one of the greatest evils ever perpetrated by fallen humanity, the murder of God the Son on the cross. No one can thwart God’s purposes for good, love and redemption. He is able to work all things together in His infinite wisdom to bring about His great plan.

What kinds of things is God able to redeem?

And also for us, we see yet another reason to reject unfaithfulness and embrace the redemption God provides:

4. Redemption leads to great fruitfulness (vv. 10a, 11a).

We see in these verses the fruitfulness that God’s future redemption will accomplish in terms of people, holy children, for the nation of Israel. But in what other ways can redemption lead to fruitfulness?

How about for you and your own personal life?

Thursday

Another reason given in the text to reject unfaithfulness and embrace God's redemption is this:

5. Redemption leads to adoption by God (v. 10b).

Note the end of verse 10, "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to the, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'" And in verse 11, "Say to your brethren, 'My people.'"

There is hardly any doctrine in the entire Bible more marvelous than the doctrine of adoption by God. What kinds of things does adoption mean from a purely human perspective, and how can this help our understanding of what it means to actually become children of God?

There are a few pictures of adoption given throughout the Scripture. For instance, the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter and the adoption of Esther by Mordecai, but perhaps the most significant picture is the adoption of the crippled Mephibosheth by King David recorded in 2 Samuel, because that adoption reveals to us the beauty of God's adoption of us.

Mephibosheth was born a descendent of David's enemy Saul. We are descendants of Adam, who rebelled against God. Spiritually we were born children of wrath according to Scripture and children of the Devil, the enemy of God. David took the initiative in seeking out

Mephibosheth to adopt him. God took the initiative in seeking us out to adopt us. Christ came to seek and save the lost and while we were yet

sinner, He died for us, His enemies. The Father loved us enough to send His son to die on the cross and make a way of reconciliation before we even knew Him. He was moving while we still hated Him and lived in rebellion.

Mephibosheth had absolutely nothing to give David or offer to him, being crippled he could not even give David any significant service. We have nothing to give or offer God and our service is crippled by our sinful flesh. Even the good works that we do before God, we only accomplish because God prepared them beforehand that we should walk in them according to Ephesians 2:10. We bear fruit only because we are first rooted in the True Vine, Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.

The very name Mephibosheth in Hebrew means, “a shameful thing.” Before we were adopted by God, we were shameful creatures, crippled men and women living for sin and conducting ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the sinful mind, and were by nature children of wrath according to Ephesians 2:3. David the king adopted a shameful thing to live in his palace as a son. God, our Father, has done the same in adopting us. Mephibosheth, before he was adopted and brought to the palace of the king lived for many years in Lo-debar, which means “The barren land.” Isn’t that a picture of where we lived spiritually before our adoption and even now to some extent before He brings His children home to His palace?

So as David brought the outcast to live with him and dine at his table as his own son and graciously gave him a magnificent inheritance to which he was not entitled, so we have a picture of our own spiritual adoption where God graciously and lovingly seeks out on His own initiative unworthy and shameful men and women, who never deserved such favor, and makes them His children, solely on the basis of their trust in His true Son, Jesus Christ. And because of our adoption, we as believers will share in the full inheritance of the Son. To all true believers God declares, “‘I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me,’ says the Lord Almighty,” 2 Cor. 6:17-18.

How can we help but wonder with the Apostle John, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). Surely Hos. 1:10 is an absolute wonder in light of verses 1-9.

Friday

Today we come to the final reason that this text urges upon us for forsaking our sins and unfaithfulness to God and embracing redemption. It is this:

6. Redemption leads to great mercy (vv. 1:11-2:1).

It is not fairness or justice that we crave from God. Not if we are sane. Just as Lo-Ammi did not want to be Lo-Ammi, but Ammi, Lo-Ruhamah did not want to be Lo-Ruhamah. She wanted to be “mercy.”

And at the end of verse 1 of chapter 2, God shows us that the reversal of the names of Hosea’s children will be complete. He says, “And say to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’”

Deep love, tender compassion is the future inheritance of the children of Israel. It will be given. But we should note that it was also available to the people, to whom Hosea preached, if they would but turn from their sin and embrace the one true and living God. And it is the same for us as well today. God’s redemption leads to great mercy.

What, Beloved, does mercy mean?

What does it mean for you personally?

How is such a gift ever to be measured. Spend some time now in prayer with the Lord. Call on Him for mercy, if you have never done so before. (See Luke 18:9-14, if you need help to know how). And if you are His child already, then thank Him, adore Him, praise Him, rejoice in Him for His mercy is so very, very great.