

Title: The Picture Of God's Love

Text: Hosea 3:1-5

Main Idea: The love of God for His people is magnificent beyond compare.

Division Statements:

1. God loves us while we are sinners and enemies in our conduct and hearts (v. 1).

The Israelites had committed spiritual adultery against God and they, indeed, relished it, as is seen in the phrase “love the raisin cakes.” It was not something that they did grudgingly or out of obligation, but their adultery was perfectly consistent with the desires of their hearts. This is how mankind is, who love the darkness rather than light (John 3:19). One of the most amazing things about the love of God is how He reaches out to and loves His enemies and those who hate Him. Consider Romans 5:8-10.

2. God redeems us from slavery (v. 2).

This is certainly not a bridal price paid to Gomer's parents. She was already Hosea's wife and all such matters were long past by this point in their relationship. Moreover, the amount was modest and not in keeping with such keep. It was, however, the amount used for the purchase of a common slave and slavery seems to be the only reasonable explanation for why Hosea would have to “buy her” (כָּרָה) (*karah*) - to purchase by trade). Most likely, Gomer, who had probably become a temple prostitute, had fallen into dire circumstances in the providence of God and had been forced to sell herself into slavery in order to provide for her basic needs. It is even possible that she was on the auction block itself at the very moment that Hosea showed up and paid the purchase price for her, though the text does not say and this enters the realm of speculation. What is not speculative, however, is that purchasing his beloved from slavery is a perfect picture of How God loves us and actually deals with us.

3. God speaks to us and sanctifies us (v. 3a).

Hosea speaks to Gomer with incredible grace here. First he says, “you shall stay with me many days.” The phrase “many days” (רַבִּים) means a great number, a super-abundance of time. It was a Hebraism that meant an indefinite ongoing period. So, Hosea wanted Gomer to know right from the very start that this was not a short term deal. It was for the rest of their lives. From now on, nothing would come between them or hinder their love and commitment.

Second, he says, “you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man.” Some have taken this to mean that Gomer was not to have relations even with Hosea and

that this was some form of discipline upon her. But this understanding isn't possible for three reasons:

- a. אָהֵב (*ahab*) "Love" in verse one precludes it. The word implies much more in terms of actual intimacy than simple cohabitation.
- b. The parallel in this passage is God's restoration of Israel in the millennium, which is always pictured in Scripture as a restoration of full marital rights.
- c. Such an interpretation makes no sense of the following words, "so, too, I will be toward you." Hosea could not have relations with Gomer if she already could not have them with him. His following statement is a statement about unequivocal faithfulness.

This statement in light of her past, combined with His own pledge of love and his willingness to seek her out and buy her out of slavery, must have had an incredible impact on the heart of Gomer. She had pursued her own sinful path in life and it had led her into the lowest of all possible pits, slavery and hopeless servitude of the worst sort. Then from seemingly out of nowhere and with no reason that she can comprehend - certainly not because he owed her anything or because she was in any way alluring to him at that point - her former husband appears, rescues her and gives her a new life. What an incredible, overwhelmingly wonderful and yet breaking thing this must have been at that moment in her life!

When I read this verse, it called to my mind the prayer of Jesus for His disciples in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth." When God speaks to us through His words, even His commands come to us as great promises filled with love and hope. They are not burdensome to the redeemed soul but a treasure (Ps. 119:162). And as we hear their truth, they do a mighty work in us. They change our hearts and give birth to new desires and commitments. They "sanctify us", that is the words of God purify and cleanse us and set us apart so that we are fit for new and holy and excellent purposes.

This is exactly how the words of God's love shining through His prophet and piercing the heart of Gomer must have worked that day.

4. God pledges Himself to us (v. 3b).

How does God pledge Himself to us? (e.g. Is. 40:10-11) How "many days" does He do this for us? (Heb. 13:5) Deal with the wonderful answers to these questions.

5. God fulfills His purpose for us (vv. 4-5):

- a. **by turning us back from sin,**

Here we see that God will take away three pairs of things: the first are "king or

prince” which represents political autonomy. The kings and princes of the northern kingdom’s history always had the effect of leading them astray and away from God. The second set is “sacrifice and sacred pillar.” The “sacred pillar”(massebah) in particular is a reference to idolatrous worship. And likewise, the third set, “ephod or teraphim” also represent pagan worship, but with a particular reference to attempting to divine and foretell the future. Teraphim were pagan idols used for divination and brought the influence of demons to bear on their lives. Thus we see that God will fulfill His purpose for Israel (and us as well - 2 Cor. 1:20)

b. by giving us new hearts toward Him, and

It is not normal of a person to seek the Lord, Rom. 3:11. They must receive a new heart and the new birth to do so. “David their king” is a reference to the Messiah, as is clear from the time reference at the end of the verse, “in the latter days.”

c. by overwhelming us with His goodness.

The Hebrew literally reads, “They will come ‘trembling’ (*pahad*) to the Lord ...” In other words, they will be in great dread and literally shaking with awe when they come before the Lord and “His goodness.”

It seems somewhat strange to our ears, I think, that God’s “goodness” should have such an impact on His people. But we must remember who we are what we have been. We are sinners, who in our former lives before faith in Christ were completely incapable of doing any good. Moreover, even after being redeemed, we are still plagued with our sin nature and constantly at war with sin and the flesh. And whatever good we do have is simply derivative in nature, and in fact a gift from Him (Eph. 2:10). Considering these truths about us, is it really so strange that His “goodness” might fill us with “trembling.” The truth is that the verse only seems strange because we are so prideful and so quick to think that we have some innate “goodness” of our own, when in fact we have none. “In the latter days” all illusions of personal “goodness” will have been stripped from our eyes, and we will know perfectly well that we stand before God wholly on the basis of His grace.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: God commands Hosea to go and love the adulterous Gomer again after their estrangement, as a picture of His own continuing love for Israel.

Sermon Proposition: The love of God for His people is magnificent beyond compare.

Interrogative: How does God love His people?

Transition: The text reveals five aspects of God’s love for His people.

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