

THE RICHNESS OF GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

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TEXTS: Hosea Ch 1-3; 1 Jn. 4: 7-12; Eph. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:28-39

This Morning I will address the amazing truth that the Richness of God's Love is UNCONDITIONAL!! There is no better picture and story of this as seen in the Minor prophet of Hosea.

READ. Hosea Ch. 1-3.

Historical Background:

HOSEA'S name means: Salvation-Help-Deliverance.

Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He had a ministry for approx. 30 yrs that began just before the Fall of Assyria and it ended with the captivity of Israel. It covered the period of 11 different Kings, (7 Israel-4 Judah).

Hosea was son of a soil farmer, which explains his usage of agricultural imagery. 4:16; 7:4-8; 8:7; 10:11-12; 11:4; 13:3, 15; 14:7.

He has been titled "the prophet of the broken heart" and he pleaded with constantly for the people of Israel-God's chosen-to RETURN to GOD! Few choose to listen.

His writing is both a prophecy and a poem and is very Evangelical. He grasped the truth of God's Unconditional love from his own painful story as well as the lives of the people of Israel.

The times consisted of greed, pride, materialism and great spiritual decline. Israel has experienced success but it lead to their lack of love, trust and worship to God Himself. Hedonism (pleasure is king) was prominent. Yet they were very Religious!!

Baal worship existed, (2:8; 11:2; 13:1) & temple prostitution took place, (4:10-18). They also built "high places and set up images and asherah poles, (2 Kings 17:7-12).

Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) was ruler during this period. Hosea warned the people of Israel that judgment would come if they did not return back to GOD. After the Kings death judgment did come. Political chaos and treachery followed and the Lord's people were crushed and carried off to captivity for 70 yrs. by the most wicked people on earth, the Syrians, (733 B. C.)

Lets focus upon Hosea's Marriage. Ch. 1:2-9.

**Children: 1 st Son, Jezreel-means "vengeance" or the "Lord will scatter."
Next child 1 daughter, Lo-Ruhamah means "unpitied" or "no compassion."
Last child, 2nd son, Lo-Ammi means "not my people."**

The names of his children point to the downfall and condition of the Israelites with their creator God and the judgment of God that would come.

***Here are some differing Theological discussions on Hosea's marriage:**

A). Hypothetical Marriage. The marriage never really happened historically. It was simply a vision or allegory and was symbolic of the relationship that was on-going with God and the Israelites.

B). Literal Marriage-Gomer unchaste. The marriage actually took place and Gomer was already unchaste and probably already a temple prostitute.

C). Spiritual Infidelity. Hosea's marriage was not a physical unfaithfulness by Gomer but rather was a spiritual one thru worship of false god's.

D). Literal Marriage. Hosea's wife Gomer was Chaste. The marriage actual took place and Gomer was chaste at the time of the marriage but later became an adulterer. Most widely held view, (my view) and here's why. It implies a Significant parallel between Hosea's marriage relationship with Gomer and God's experience with His chosen people, the Israelites!

In the O.T. the Israelites are presented as having been chaste when exposed by God in the wilderness, (Jer. 2:1-3). But God, being all knowing knew of their coming unfaithfulness.

Like Hosea, God again and again extended His love to the Israelites although the nation continued to be unfaithful and live in sin. Yet in the end, God thru His unconditional love would show grace and mercy to His chosen people and Restoration would follow.

This is the Theme of Hosea and very important for us to remember as we continue to move forward to the application of this theme!

Hosea declared “it is the sin of Israel” of both its religious leaders and the people. (4:1-9; 7:13-8:14; 9:1-9).

Time and prosperity brought about great spiritual decline that led to the chosen people of God breaking covenant with God. Judgment would come but in the end we see a real picture of God’s Unconditional Love that He had for His chosen people.

God Himself would bring about an amazing RESTORATION, (14:1-7). This is seen very clearly in the picture of Hosea’s REDEMPTION OF HIS UNFAITHFUL WIFE GOMER!!!

Hosea’s Redemption:

3:1-9 Lets read this again.

To get his point across the prophet Hosea uses his own heartbreaking marriage relationship with Gomer as an illustration to the Israelites.

Gomer most likely left Hosea after the birth of their third child. God now tells Hosea to retrieve his unfaithful wife.

The original text actually reads like this, “Go yet love a woman, loved by a friend and one who commits adultery.”

Note that Gomer is merely called “woman” here (issah) without a possessive prefix to indicate “your woman” or “your wife” which clearly shows the estrangement between the prophet and his very own wife.

Just think for a moment..if Hosea seen his very own wife in such a detached manner how much harder would it be for him to carry out the Lord’s calling to redeem her? Yet in redeeming Gomer, Hosea would be illustrating the very picture of God’s continuing unconditional love that he had for the Israelites, who too were living a very unfaithful, adulteress life in worshipping other gods and living for pleasures.

Hosea buys back Gomer for “fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and half of barley” (3:2).

Ever been to a live auction? Have you ever been the bidder? Picture Hosea at a auction bidding on his very own wife! What was his emotions like?

In reality, Gomer was still Hosea's wife and there was no payment required of him to her. But the price reveals the true picture of the relational and emotional gap between them.

Gomer was now on Public Auction as a slave. There was 3 ways in which people became slaves in that time period.

- A). Through conquest-battles-wars=prisoners**
- B). By birth, parents were slaves.**
- C). Through debt.**

Hosea bids..our text isn't clear how many times he had to bid. Again think for a moment of the emotion of the moment..Hosea bids 15 pieces of silver, a homer an a half of barley.

According to Ez. 45:11 a "homer" was equal to ten "ephas" and was equal to about 10 bushels. Each bushel was worth about one shekel. Therefore the barley was worth an additional 15 shekels. So the total bid from Hosea to buy back his unfaithful wife Gomer came to 30 shekels of silver. The standard price for a slave was 30 shekels, (Ex. 21:32).

Hosea in reality could have required the life of Gomer! But after his emotional bidding he now owned her, all because of His unconditional love he had for her!

*****What a scene this must have been!**

***** What a picture and story we have of UNCONDITIONAL LOVE that unfolds before us!**

***** Yet this picture and story of Hosea's Unconditional Love applies directly to our lives in just as powerful of fashion!**

Spiritual Applications:

- I. A). YOU are Gomer! You were the slave sold on the auction block of sin! One scholar James M. Boice states, "this is the greatest chapter of the Bible because it portrays the greatest story of the Bible."**
- B).The devil and the world are bidding for your soul and life through all the fallen world and temptation has to offer... wealth, fame, pride, pleasures (1 John 2:15-17; Matt 4:1-11).**
- C). All have sinned and turned their back on God, falling short of His Glory. Man has broken covenant! What do we truly deserve!**

D). There is HOPE!! When all seems lost, God through His Unconditional love bid for our souls and bought us back through His son Jesus Christ, John 3:16.! The cost was greater than a mere 30 shekels of silver. The cost was the Life and blood of His own SON! Think of the emotions that God must have had!

E). Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a RANSOM (to deliver by the payment of a price, Matt 20:28). Jesus..I bid the price of my very own blood for mankind as helpless, enslaved and unfaithful sinners. I out bid my rival and I bid my blood for YOU!!

F). 1 Peter 1:18-19.

G). The truth of God's Unconditional Love is inescapable!!

- II. A) Now that you have been “ransomed” and “purchased” with the precious blood of Jesus Christ you must remain in a loving faithful relationship! Gomer was now to remain faithful to Hosea alone, (3:3)**
B). The Israelites too were to remain faithful to God! They were to be intimate with no other! Because of God's demonstration of Unconditional Love to them their relationship too was to be based upon their love to God! To love God with all their Heart, Soul, Mind & Strength and to live a life of faithfulness!!
- III. A). Now that you have encountered God's Unconditional Love you are Called to demonstrate God's Unconditional Love to others. To your wife (Eph. 5:22-25) your children, pastor, neighbor and yes even your enemies! Rom. 5:5, Matt. 5:45-48!!**

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYING TO ME THRU THIS TRUTH??

THE RICHNESS OF GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE IS AN AMAZING STORY!! A TRUTH AND STORY WORTH EXPERIENCING!!!

IT IS MY PRAYER THAT YOU WILL ENCOUNTER GOD'S UNCONDITONAL LOVE THAT HE HAS FOR YOU IN A WAY YOU NEVER HAVE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE AND THAT YOU DISPLAY IT TO OTHERS!!

**In Christ's love
Donn Jibben**