

JULY 16, 1995

DEMONSTRATING UNDESERVED LOVE

I saw a preview of a popular TV show about the work of police detectives in a large city in which one actor says, "He who maintains control wins!" That statement could have many interpretations, but the one I first thought of related to a Proverb that states the same idea: [He that is] slow to anger [is] better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. [Prov. 16:32] The Living Bible uses the phrase "have self-control" rather than "ruleth his spirit." We need to do some periodic self examinations to learn who or what controls us. We might be surprised to find, in most instances, we are controlled by what others think, say, and do. If we sense that someone is critical of us, then we get defensive; if we think someone is angry with us, then we also become angry; and if we think someone loves us, then we will have feelings of care and concern for them. This is **not** exercising self-control. It is rare to find a person who lives his life based upon "who he is" and upon predetermined principles he has adopted.

Have you known anyone who was so much in love with someone else that no matter what the other person did, they still loved them? Usually, our love is such that we are ready to forgive the small mistakes (if there are not too many of them). However, most people would have much difficulty in being reconciled to someone who had been guilty of infidelity.

Hosea was an Old Testament prophet who showed an unusual quality of love. God called upon him to show, in a dramatic way, the condition of the relationship of God with Israel. Hosea lived in the Eighth Century before the birth of Christ (about the same time as Amos and Micah) and he brought God's message to Israel prior to their being conquered by the Assyrians. Hosea dramatized the message in the failed marriage relationship He had with his unfaithful wife Gomer.

HOSEA 1:1-5 The list of kings of Judah and Israel tells us that God's word to the prophet came to him over many years. Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah. God was using several messengers to attempt to get the attention of His people. Both Judah and Israel had turned away from God and were trusting in themselves, in alliances with other nations, and were even relying on the pagan gods of the heathen nations. In God's eyes, this was unfaithfulness and He viewed it as spiritual adultery.

Biblical scholars are divided in their opinion of whether Gomer was a prostitute before Hosea married her or if she became one after their marriage. If she became a prostitute after their marriage, then the analogy of God's relationship with Israel is matched better. Hosea knew before he married Gomer she would become unfaithful to him. God had referred to her as an "adulterous wife." The King James Version translates the word as "a wife of whoredoms." The closest English equivalent to the Hebrew word used here would be "a wife of fornication." In a sense, each of these descriptions fit the situation with the nation. They had been unfaithful and were, therefore, adulterous. Occasionally, they had established alliances for financial gain and thus were guilty of whoredoms. In other cases, their sordid nature had led them into a lifestyle of sensuality and illicit pleasure as they engaged in the debauchery of pagan religions. In this, they qualified for the final description.

Not only would the wife Hosea was to marry be unfaithful in their relationship, her unfaithfulness would produce offspring that did not belong to Hosea. Many lives are complicated or ruined by the consequences (offspring) of sins. These complications are not the fruit of a godly life and produce trouble and heartache that follow people for their entire lives.

Just as Hosea knew what was in store for himself, God knew that Israel would be unfaithful to Him when He brought them out of Egypt. Nevertheless, because of His love for them and His love for us, He built them into a nation so that His plan of restoration of mankind could be carried out.

Hosea was a prophet whom God had to “live out” the message. He did what the Lord instructed him. He married Gomer and three children were born to her. They gave the children strange names. They named the first Jezreel. You remember that Jezreel was a place of many murders. The first was Naboth whom Jezebel had killed because her husband Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard. When Jehu came into power, he killed all the family of Ahab and Jezebel. He attempted to destroy all members of that family. Perhaps he was overly zealous and killed some who were innocent. Jehu did wipe out Baal worship in Israel and this pleased God. God had promised Jehu that four generations of his family would be on the throne of Israel. These kings went away from God and at the end of the fourth generation, the nation of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) ceased to exist.

HOSEA 1:6-9 The second child conceived by Gomer was named Lo-ruhamah. The name literally means “she has not obtained compassion.” This message meant God was at the end of His patience with the Northern Kingdom. Because they had gone away from God, they stopped having any part in God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. Therefore, God said, “I will utterly take them away.” However, God’s plan for salvation would not be thwarted; He would continue to have mercy upon Judah. As Jacob had prophesied (while in Egypt) “the scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes,” God would send the Messiah and He would come out of the tribe of Judah.

Again, Gomer had a child and this boy was named Lo-ammi. This name meant “Not My people.” Through the centuries, the Israelites had thought of themselves as “the people of God.” Now, they had wandered so far away that God did not consider them “His people.” This was their choice. Notice that God did not force Himself upon them.

A Hosea’s prophecy unfolded, he spoke of the time to come when the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together again. At that time, the names of the children of Hosea and Gomer will be changed. The “Lo” will be dropped from their names. This predicts that God will have compassion and will accept them as His people.

HOSEA 3:1-5 Gomer had left Hosea and was living the life of a harlot. Like prostitutes in our time, these women were in a form of slavery. Many “work” for someone else. Apparently, Gomer was in a similar situation. Hosea was able to pay money and produce to buy her.

To further symbolize the plight of Israel, Hosea would not treat Gomer as a wife for a period of time. This was for purposes of ritualistic cleansing. This time of cleansing was to represent the time when Israel would have no king or prince. No one would be in a position of real leadership. The practice of sacrifices used in worship would be suspended. They would see no real symbols of religion among the people. This may be what we are seeing today in our nation. It is certainly true of what is happening in modern day Israel.

Hosea looked forward to the time when God would restore Israel and a King such as David would reign. This is to be a reality in the latter days. We recognize this King as Jesus Who will return and reign in the millennial kingdom. Some think this refers to *physical* Israel and other think this reference is to *spiritual* Israel. Whatever is meant, the lesson for us is that a nation that turns away from God and repeatedly abandons Him will find judgement is sure to come. Though God continues to love us, we miss out on His blessings and fail to be a part of His great undertaking in the Kingdom of God unless we are faithful.