

LESSONS IN

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

By:

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BOOK OF HOSEA

LESSON I

Opening remarks

For a number of years now, I have been teaching that the men in the marriage need to step up to assume the role clearly outlined in Scripture. I have also defined the role of the wife and have taught likewise. The goal has been to develop oneness in the relationship without stumbling into the pattern so many have erroneously taught regarding the roles of the husband and wife.

In recent years, I have become troubled by the women in both our society and in the Christian home. It is becoming more and more apparent that more and more women are becoming the stumbling block to a successful Christian marriage.

In a related issue regarding the American society, it seems more and more women are involved in immoral and ungodly activities as the years go by. This is not to say that men are less so, but historically there has been something about the women in our society that helped keep it on an even keel morally and spiritually. This seems to be diminishing rapidly. A much higher percentage of women are involved in serious drugs, alcohol, crime, the sex industry, rampant sexual infidelity, immorality, unprecedented numbers of unwed pregnancies and single moms. Along those lines you have heard about the increased sexual encounters between female teachers and their students. The unconcerned murder by mothers of their own children is always a shock. Statistics tell us that 80% or more of the children murdered in this country are murdered by their mothers, frequently with the prompting of their live-in boy friends, and if you add abortion to that, we are well passed 95%.

There is so much else women have succumbed too it is staggering. This not only has affected the core of our nation, our homes and our children, but also has infected the church. Too many of the women who were once considered the rudder of the family ship are rudderless and out of control being blown astray by every ill wind, even in Christian homes.

Wondering how this came about, I remembered that my daughter had commented about the women's movement having caused some radical adjustments in our social fabric. So I asked her for her thoughts on the matter and here is a summary of what she thought.

“Before the women's movement, women had little choice for their lives. Most were married, had children, and then raised their children while taking care of the home. Some worked but not usually in what we would call ‘high power’ positions. Many women were unhappy about the fact that they could not easily choose an alternative to the homemaker role. The best result of the women's movement is that most women are now free to choose their path in life whether it is homemaker or high powered executive. Ironically I say ‘most’ because ‘homemaker’ is now not an option for many women as a result of the women's movement and the economic demands on women who want it all.”

“These choices have had an obvious impact on the family. Many children are being raised primarily by a secondary provider. This has led to numerous obvious problems for children. Divorce is rampant. Women’s health issues are beginning to match the men’s. I’m sure the founders of the WM were looking forward to the stress related diseases such as heart disease. Then, there is little time for cooking which leads to poor eating and little time together for many families.”

“The least thought about effect however is how the WM has impacted men. When women went to work, they in effect ‘invaded’ the man’s world. Where then were men to go? The women assumed (wrongly) that they would then ‘invade’ the home. Men did not play along. They still came home and wanted the woman to take care of the home. Women were noticeably upset. ‘They should do half the work!’ was the cry heard ‘round the country. ‘Why should we have to work and take care of the home?’ I don’t think that women took into account the fact that if women are willing to do it all, men will pretty much let them. Women screamed to be let into the work world so men said ‘Ok’. They did not agree to ‘equity’ except in the work place. So where did this leave men? It seems to me that men have been left without a definitive role. They are by nature competitive and providers so if that is removed, what are they left with?”

“From where I am observing, it seems the pendulum swung one way and now is beginning to find its way to some middle ground. The fact is that a lot of damage has been done in the swinging. We women were irresponsible with the freedoms that were gained for us. We are the reason that the 80’s were christened the ‘me’ generation. We were quick to embrace all of the moral degradation that we were being kept from and we relished in it regardless of the consequences. We have come a long way baby.”

So according to my daughter, we have gained some ground and lost a lot, especially where family and children are concerned. The general deterioration of a society is not new. Every civilization that rose to historical heights deteriorated as the prosperity and freedom was exercised not in continued moral excellence but in immoral degradation and corruption first by its men and then by its women. Like the classic example of ancient Rome, collapse happened from within. It seems that prosperity and military strength gives the citizenry the idea that they can do what they wish, because there is no need to fear God or depend on Him for anything. He is not necessary anymore.

Someone said to me recently, “After 9-11 you saw unity in the nation, ‘God bless America’ signs everywhere and so on but in a few short years those sentiments disappeared.” We are now in a steeper slide than ever before. That is what people do in the midst of peace and prosperity. By the way, the reason many want God to bless America is so they can enjoy continued prosperity and debauchery within the security of the USA. They really don’t care about God at all. The unfortunate thing is that so many women have fallen into the pit that the standards that held the fabric of our society together is indeed ripping apart.

So I am going to address this issue of the women through the study of a Biblical marriage. This marriage is sadly much like many marriages today, except this one takes place 2,800 years ago. I think we will find this story rather amazing, because none of what I described as occurring today is foreign to the Bible. It has happened in every social and political setting since creation and, of

course, we saw it in the garden. The garden, by the way, is not to be understood as the story of God's first couple falling into disobedience and screwing up all the rest of our lives. The intent of the Lord and the way the story is written in the Hebrew makes it clear that the reader is to identify him or herself with the story. It is the story of the world; it is in fact, your story and mine. But we are not studying Genesis. We are going look at the Book of Hosea.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Overview:

The spiritual whoredom of Israel (and Judah) set forth by symbolic acts; Gomer taken to wife at God's command: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi, the children. Yet a promise of Judah and Israel's restoration.

Introduction:

The Book of Hosea is a multilayered book. It is not the typical book of a prophet. In it we have the story of the prophet Hosea and his marriage to a woman named Gomer. But the relationship of these two people becomes an allegory portraying the relationship between God and His people Israel. Hosea becomes a personification of God and Gomer of Israel. Their children also become portraits not only of the generations or descendants of Israel but of the abominations of Israel and God's feelings toward these abominations. As such, the message to the nation and the reader is clear. It is that message we will distill and learn.

But first, let's examine the historical situation in which the story is set up by dissecting verse one or chapter one.

1:1

1: The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

1: This book begins the same as the books of Joel, Micah, Jonah, Ezekiel (1:3) and Zephaniah indicating immediately that the Lord gives His authority to what is said through the prophet. Isaiah's first verse is similar as well. Hosea is designated as "the son of Beeri", (pronounced "bee-air-ri") and his name has the same root as Joshua, Hoshea and Jesus; and means "deliverance" or in the case of Joshua and Jesus "God delivers" (saves, rescues, protects, shelters). The name is so common that the individual described is specified by the name of his father as in "Joshua, son of Nun", or "Jesus son of Joseph".

Hosea prophesied during the latter days of the kingdom of Israel and his message is to both Israel

and Judah.¹ The rule of the kings of Judah listed here is from c. 792-686. Jeroboam II (son of Joash) ruled Israel from 793-753. His prophetic ministry took place in Israel, the only writing prophet in the Old Testament to actually live in Israel. From the time of Jeroboam II onward all the kings worshipped false gods and idols. But Israel was flourishing under Jeroboam II, who recovered the possessions seized on by Syria. So Hosea's prophecy of its downfall at that time was the more striking. And since Hosea's word was principally to Israel, the story becomes significant. Hosea's ministry occurred around the years of 750-715 B.C. Hosea would have witnessed the destruction of Israel and its capital city Samaria by the Assyrians in 722-721 B.C.

The Book of Hosea is unique in that it is a prophecy based in the life and tragic marriage of the prophet himself which becomes an analogy for the relationship between God and Israel. Hosea, the husband, and Gomer his wife portray God and His relationship with the nation of Israel. The book is not so much a prophecy as we often think of prophecy, but prophecy in its most basic and common form, that of a prophet of God assessing the spiritual condition of the nation and, depending upon the response of the nation to the word of God, assigning consequences, usually blessings or cursings.

As the book unfolds, it is sometimes hard to differentiate between what is being said about Gomer and Israel as the story unfolds. Gomer becomes the personification of Israel. What is said about one is being said about the other at the same time.

The reason we are studying this book is to: 1. Understand the heart of God and how He feels about His people even when they are disobedient; 2. To see how destructive unfaithfulness is in a relationship; and 3: To grasp the consequences of such unfaithfulness; and 4. To see God's willingness to have mercy and offer hope in spite of the sin of His people. The point of studying this book is to find a way to emulate or imitate God in His understanding and approach to such a problem.

This study is a reproduction of a weekly series of lectures given in 2008. Each lesson will include a review of the previous week's material.

¹ Note map of the two kingdoms.

LESSON II

Last week I made a few comments about the state of our society and postulated that many of our women, once the pillars and preservers of good behavior and moral stability have fallen away from that role into immorality, drug addiction, debauchery, crime, and indolence. Though I most often speak to us men and the need for them to take firm hold on the servant leader role God pictures for us, I have become increasingly disturbed over the past decade or more by what has happened to the women of our nation. There is so much corruption our women have succumbed too it is staggering. This not only has affected the core of our nation, our homes and our children, but also has infected the church. Too many of the women who were once considered the rudder of the family ship are rudderless and out of control being blown astray by every ill wind, even in Christian homes.

In consulting with my daughter who has taken a careful look at the women's movement and its effect over the past thirty years, she noted that, "The best result of the women's movement is that most women are now free to choose their path in life whether it is homemaker or high powered executive. Ironically I say 'most' because 'homemaker' is now not an option for many women as a result of the women's movement and the economic demands on women who want it all. These choices have had an obvious impact on the family. We women were irresponsible with the freedoms that were gained for us. We are the reason that the 80's were christened the "me" generation. We were quick to embrace all of the moral degradation that we were being kept from and we relished in it regardless of the consequences."

The general deterioration of a society is not new. Every civilization that rose to historical heights deteriorated as the prosperity and freedom was exercised not in continued moral excellence but in immoral degradation and corruption first by its men and then by its women. Like the classic example of ancient Rome, collapse happened from within. It seems that prosperity and military strength gives the citizenry the idea that they can do what they wish, because there is no need to fear God or depend on Him for anything. He is not necessary anymore.

So I am addressing this issue of the women through the study of a Biblical marriage. This marriage is sadly much like many marriages today, except this one takes place 2,800 years ago. I think we will find this story rather amazing, because none of what I described as occurring today is foreign to the Bible. It has happened in every social, political and relational setting since creation. This study takes us to the Book of Hosea.

The Book of Hosea is a multilayered book. It is not the typical book of a prophet. In it we have the story of the prophet Hosea and his marriage to a woman named Gomer. But the relationship of these two people becomes an allegory portraying the relationship between God and His people Israel. Hosea becomes a personification of God and Gomer of Israel. Their children also become portraits not only of the generations or descendants of Israel but of the abominations of Israel and God's feelings toward these abominations. As such, the message to the nation and the reader is clear. It is that message we will distill and learn.

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The reason we are studying this book is to: 1. Understand the heart of God and how He feels about His people even when they are disobedient; 2. To see how destructive unfaithfulness is in a relationship; and 3: To grasp the consequences of such unfaithfulness; and 4. To see God's willingness to have mercy and offer hope in spite of the sin of His people. The point of studying this book is to find a way to emulate or imitate God in His understanding and approach to such problems so we can be stimulated, in this age of corruption, to make choices that honor God and keep our marriages and families on an even keel.

In looking at the book, we find most of the story of Hosea and Gomer in the first three chapters. But the remainder of the book is to be shuffled within the story line as it is God's commentary on each part of the marriage as it progresses and God applies it to Israel and His own relationship (or marriage) to her. Let's look at the story and intertwine God's commentary and viewpoint within it.

1:1 Review

1:2-5: Hosea prophesied during the latter days of the kingdom of Israel and his message is to The divided kingdoms of Israel to the north, and Judah to the south. Once united under David and Solomon, the kingdoms were nearly 200 years before Hosea was born. His prophetic ministry took place in Israel, the only writing prophet in the Old Testament to actually live in Israel. From the time of Jeroboam II mentioned in this verse, onward all the kings worshipped false gods and idols. **But Israel was flourishing under Jeroboam II, making Hosea's prophecy of its downfall more striking.** Hosea's ministry occurred around the years of 750-715 B.C. Hosea would have witnessed the destruction of Israel and its capital city Samaria by the Assyrians in 722-721 B.C.

2: When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and *have* children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD."

In verse two, the analogy is revealed. The land, that is the nation of Israel is committing "flagrant harlotry". In other words, the people, led by her leaders, are worshipping and sacrificing to idols and false gods. The worship of many of these false gods involves debauchery, immorality, and even at times, child sacrifice. Hosea is to marry a loose woman and his marriage will illustrate the situation between God and His people. Hosea himself will both

experience and feel the very heart of God and so will be able to convey this to God's people with pathos.

3-5: 3: So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4: And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5: "On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

So Hosea took to himself a wife who was a prostitute. This was not something that was done among God's faithful people, and it had to be difficult for Hosea to even think of such a thing let alone follow through with it. But the issue was redemption and all its attributing realities. The very existence of a nation depended upon whether the leadership heeded the Word of God and redirected the people to the Lord or not.

It is possible that Gomer had been sold into prostitution by her parents. She at first may have been an unwilling party to the subsequent humiliation. I come to this conclusion because the analogy used later in Hosea begins with Israel in Egypt and this parallel would fit. God rescues Israel from slavery only to have her return to the gods of Egypt and Canaan. This is much like the story of Hosea and Gomer. Hosea rescues Gomer from her life of slavery to owners who had forced her into prostitution only to see her voluntarily return to it.

This is borne out a little later in the book. For example, in 11:1 the Lord says, 1. "When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." Since Israel is pictured by Gomer, and was rescued from slavery in Egypt, so Gomer was taken from her slavery to prostitution into his care and protection. Yet, in time Gomer's old lovers called to her and she wandered back to them. In 11:2 we read, "The more they (God's prophets) called them (Israel), the more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols. 3: Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them. 4: I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down *and* fed them." God's deliverance of Israel is now pictured by Hosea's rescue of Gomer. Yet we see in verse 5, "They will not return to the land of Egypt; But Assyria--he will be their king Because they refused to return *to Me*."

And in 13:4-6 The Lord says, 4: "Yet I *have been* the LORD your God Since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any God except Me, For there is no savior besides Me. 5: I cared for you in the wilderness, In the land of drought. 6: *As they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, And being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore they forgot Me."

This is so much like the story of Gomer. Her name means, "That which comes to a fitting end". Sort of like saying, "You are going to get what's rightly due to you." I don't think I have ever heard this name given to anyone except perhaps the fictional T.V. character Gomer Pyle.

So Hosea took Gomer as his wife and she conceived and bore him a son whom the Lord told him to name "Jezreel" meaning "God sows" or "scatters seed". Why this naming? You will recognize that this name is also the name of the valley of Jezreel. The naming of Hosea's and Gomer's son is a deliberately irony. Please listen carefully as this is a little complicated. A century before, in

the valley of Jezreel a bloody coup intook place directed by the Lord through Elisha. Jehu, son of king Jehoshaphat of Israel took the throne of Israel wiping out the house of Ahab and Jezebel primarily for their support of the prophets of Baal and the worship of idols, particularly the golden calf of Samaria.² He had all the prophets of Baal killed.³ This took place in Jezreel.

Unfortunately, Jehu did not eradicate the remainder of the pagan shrines and the land soon slipped back into idolatry.⁴ The irony is that Jehu's own dynasty would be eradicated because of its continued adherence to the cult of Baal and other pagan shrines. This eradication would take place in the valley of Jezreel.

In chapter 1 verse five the Lord says, "On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." The "bow" represents the military power of Israel. This defeat took place in 733 B.C. in the valley of Jezreel by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III and began the ultimate defeat and captivity of Israel by Assyria. Remember, Jezreel means "God's sows" and the name of Hosea's son is both a warning and a prophecy. Israel reaped what it sowed not what God sowed which was the prophecy God sowed through Hosea and others..

So we know the end of this story. Why did this end come about? That is the fascinating tale of Hosea, and the revealing of the dynamic relationship between an omnipotent and loving God and a people free to make choices about their lives. Herein lies the lessons and tests we face and about which we make decisions.

² II Kings 9:1-10:11

³ II Kings 10:12-28

⁴ II Kings 10:29-36

LESSON III

The Book of Hosea portrays the story of a faithful and loving husband (Hosea) married to an unfaithful wife (Gomer) whom he had rescued from slavery in prostitution. Through the story of these two we come to see in Hosea the loving acts of God on behalf of His people Israel. Ironically, Hosea's name is the same as others who brought deliverance and rescue to people, Joshua for one and Jesus for another. The acts of Joshua and Jesus as well as Hosea involved what we call "salvation", which means deliverance and rescue from the consequences of one's own sin. So far in our study we see in the person of Gomer:

1. Israel enslaved in Egypt as Gomer was enslaved by owners in prostitution.
2. We see Israel rescued from that enslavement by God as Gomer was delivered from slavery by Hosea.
3. Then like Israel, Gomer begins to yearn for her old life, but not before she bears a son to Hosea to whom God gives the name Jezreel. We saw last week that the boy's name becomes both a warning and a prophecy to Israel that as the worst of their kings was destroyed in the valley of Jezreel in times past along with the shrines of false gods destroyed returning the people to true faith in the true God, so they will also be destroyed in the valley of Jezreel for going back to their worship of false gods if they don't turn from their evil ways.

We see many other things in the story of Hosea and Gomer. 1. We see in Gomer and Hosea not just the ancient story of God's difficult relationship with ancient Israel, but also with the our world, our church, our family and of course ourselves individually. 2. But we also see the heart of God in His patience with Israel even when she goes back to her ungodliness. 3. We see His appeal to her to remain faithful and He gives her ample opportunity to return to Him. 4. We see the consequences of her acts of disregard of God in a prosperous and secure society, much like we see in our nation. 5. We see in Gomer how, as in our society, the woman's infidelity and slipping into carnality brings ruin upon the home and ultimately the society. We have commented on this - as a lesson to all of us - that in the midst of the nation in which we now live, that social corruption begins to effect the church and even the women in the church who at one time were the standard bearers of right and wrong in the home and family.

We want to study this book as a contemporary book, very relevant to us as Americans and as Christians so that we will make the sensible choices to remain faithful to God and each other as the world and much of the church crumbles around us. Finally, we want to appeal to you ladies to reconsider your role in the family, the church and the society in terms of your walk with God and your importance to the guidance of the family in the ways of the Lord. We need you. To the book. We left Hosea and Gomer at home where, after Hosea rescued Gomer from her slavery to prostitution (which pictures Israel's slavery in Egypt and ours to sin. At home she bore him a son whom God named Jezreel. Let's look at verses 2-5 as a review.

1:2: When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and *have* children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD." 3: So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and

she conceived and bore him a son. 4: And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5: "On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

Sometime after the birth of Jezreel, and even in light of the impact of the meaning of his name, Gomer began to flirt with her old life in the world, leaving home to take up with the old crowd.. Verse 6 tells us,

1:6, "Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them."

Was this second child the actual child of Hosea or that of another man? The scripture strongly suggests it was that of another man which we will see momentarily. You see, what Gomer did after her first child was weaned was to go out into the pagan society that had been her home for so many years and involve herself with other men. Apparently living with a godly man was not exciting enough for her and her heart longed for the wild and drunken ways of the ungodly. In verse 6 God's name for the new daughter is given and it's meaning. But the explanation for giving her this name is found in 2:4-5.

2:4: "Also, I will have no compassion on her children, Because they are children of harlotry.
5: "For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give *me* my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

So Gomer, a portrait of God's people, returned to seeking the company of others, leaving the Lord and prostituted herself before idols and foreign dignitaries. We'll look at that part of it in a while. Gomer, in the meantime, stayed with Hosea and nursed the second child until she was weaned and then left even again to return to her old life. A striking picture of God's patience is seen here in that which is not said. When Gomer was found pregnant with another man's child, Hosea had the legal right to do one of two things. He could divorce her or he could have her tried and stoned to death. He did neither. In fact what he did was astounding we will see in our next lesson.

Meanwhile, Gomer's unfaithfulness in returning to her old haunts probably portrays the succession of kings of Israel who at times, like Jehu, desired to restore Israel to the Lord but succumbed to the political, social and religious pressures of Samaria, falling into idolatry, debauchery and ungodliness of every kind and so went the people. This is always the case unless – and here is the point of this study – God's people choose to remain faithful to Him in spite of social and peer pressure.

But Gomer's decision, like Israel's - and like so many Christians was to indulge herself once again in the garbage of the world. So after giving birth to Jezreel, then to Lo-Ruhamah, she once again went back to her old life once Lo-Ruhamah was weaned. In time she was found pregnant with another child not of her own husband. Shamelessly she returned home to Hosea to have the

baby. The unknown father apparently did not want to care for a pregnant woman and a child on the way. Nothing much changes, does it? But she knew Hosea would take her back and care for her. Did she believe she Hosea was a sucker? Or did she really repent and make the choice to be faithful to him? We will have to wait to find out. I hope you are applying the story to the present time, because this is the whole point. This third child is named in 1:9.

1:9, And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."

The name of this new born son leave no doubt that it was the child of adultery. Again, Hosea took the mother and child into his care and they were rejoined to the older son Jezreel and the other daughter Lo-Ruhamah. Again, Hosea did not abandon, divorce or bring charges against Gomer and her children which he could have legally done. Instead, he showered Gomer with mercy, as God does with us, but warned her of the consequences of the continued ungodly behavior.

These children of adultery present their own picture of the political and spiritual deterioration of Israel. Instead of building their alliance with God and looking to him for their future, the leadership of Israel as well as Judah sought foreign alliances. The “seed” of these alliances was a continued immersion in the idolatry and ways of the foreign nations including intermarriage which brought all the spiritual corruption of the foreign countries right into the homes of the Israelites. Israel came to look more like the heathen nations than the people of God. They, by their own choice were no longer His people. Thus the names of the children.

Note Hosea 2:5 again for a moment before we return to this section. Referring to the children God says, "For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give *me* my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

Israel, pictured by Gomer went after many “lovers”, uncaringly being unfaithful to her loving husband Hosea. Among these “lovers” were Assyria and Egypt. Just a note; in chapter 4, Israel is designated as “Ephraim”, the leading tribe of Israel. But more significantly, both Ephraim and Manasseh were born of Joseph by his Egyptian wife. Instead of the tribe of Joseph existing, the two half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh took possession in the land of Canaan. Interestingly enough Israel, now dubbed Ephraim, is the picture of Israel’s infidelity and guess whom it is with? Look at Hosea 7:8-1.1

8: Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim has become a cake not turned.

This image illustrates Ephraim being burned by the very nations from whom he seeks sustenance, becoming a useless and unpalatable cake. Now back to the point of this turning to the old “lovers”. Notice verses 9-11.

9: Strangers devour his strength, Yet he does not know *it*; Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him, Yet he does not know *it*. 10: Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, yet they

have not returned to the LORD their God, nor have they sought Him, for all this. 11: So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense; They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

Note chapter 5:11-13,

11: Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, Because he was determined to follow *man's* command. 12: Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim, And like rottenness (a worm) to the house of Judah. 13: When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah his wound, Then Ephraim went to Assyria And sent to King Jareb. But he is unable to heal you, Or to cure you of your wound.

So Gomer, the picture of God's people past and present, suffers hardship and rejection from the ungodly with whom she thought she would find fulfillment and she comes back to Hosea (that is the Lord) to be healed. Note 2:6-13,

2:6: "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. 7: "She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!' 8: "For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, *Which* they used for Baal. 9: "Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax *Given* to cover her nakedness. 10: "And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will rescue her out of My hand. 11: "I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths And all her festal assemblies. 12: "I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. 13: "I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD.

As Hosea clamped down on Gomer after the third child was born and warned her of the disasters she would suffer if she went back to her old life, so God warns Israel of the impending consequences of her unfaithfulness to God.

Did Gomer finally get the picture? Did she finally choose to stay home with her husband and children? The astounding story of what happens next to Hosea, Gomer and the children is better than any soap opera but we will have to wait until next week for the next installment.

LESSON IV

Hosea 1

We left Gomer and Hosea at their house with the three children, the last two illegitimate. Let's review. As you may recall, Gomer, after being rescued by Hosea from enslavement to prostitution, bore him a son after he took her to be his wife. The boy was named Jezreel and his name was both a warning and a prophecy to Israel of her destruction in the valley of Jezreel if she didn't repent of her idolatry and dependence upon foreign alliances. But Gomer, the personification of Israel in this Book of Hosea, left Hosea to return to the world she was rescued from. Later she was found pregnant with a child not of Hosea and returned home to bear and wean her new born daughter. God told Hosea to name her Lo-ruhamah, meaning "unloved". After Lo-ruhamah was weaned, Gomer once again sought the company of her old lovers and once again became pregnant with a child not of Hosea. She came back to Hosea, gave birth to another son and God told Hosea to name him "Lo-ammi". Hosea 1:9 gives us the whole story, "And the LORD said, 'Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God.'" Thus even the children became portraits of what was happening between God and Israel.

By this time you might wonder not so much about Gomer, but about Hosea. Why doesn't he get rid of this woman? But in the story, it is the role of Hosea to portray the mercy, patience and grace of God. Yes, by law, Hosea could have divorced Gomer and even gone to the length to have her tried and stoned to death. But Hosea demonstrates the love, patience and mercy of God for the people He loves. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Like Gomer, Israel had rejected her God in favor of idolatry and all the attending debauchery including sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, profanity and corruption often seen in a prosperous and secure kingdom as Israel was in those days under Jeroboam II. This teases us to look ahead to our own nation. Prosperous and secure, 9-11-2001 caused quite a shaking to our land and its people. The nation suddenly turned around and the phrase "God bless America" became popular and churches experienced a quick rise in attendance. But that was 6 ½ years ago and now the country has fallen even further into debauchery, largely because their freedom and security to do so has been restored by the courage of young men and women who have risked and given their lives to protect and secure our freedoms – the same young men and women who are castigated by the people whose lives are secure due to their efforts. Most of us are disgusted at this.

Further, the increased debauchery and ungodliness of our society has tainted our churches as well and perhaps even worse, many of our women, who once standing firm for right and good, have succumbed to the world's temptations and are now demonstrating the worst sort of corruption never before witnessed by this nation. Thus Gomer's story becomes not just the story of Hosea and an adulterous wife, but that of God and Israel, and even of America and the church. So as Christians, our challenge in these days is to decide what kind of people of God we will be as our history unfolds today and in the future.

Gomer, as Hosea's wife, portrayed Israel's idolatrous relationship with God. After providing

prosperity and security to Israel for 150 years and showing her mercy in the face of her adultery, God finally warned Israel of the consequences of her behavior. Speaking to Jezreel the Lord says in chapter 2:1-13,

1: Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah." 2: "Contend with your mother, contend, For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; And let her put away her harlotry from her face And her adultery from between her breasts, 3: Or I will strip her naked And expose her as on the day when she was born. I will also make her like a wilderness, Make her like desert land And slay her with thirst. 4: "Also, I will have no compassion on her children, Because they are children of harlotry. 5: "For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give *me* my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.' 6: "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. 7: "She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find *them*. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!' 8: "For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, *Which* they used for Baal. 9: "Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax *Given* to cover her nakedness. 10: "And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will rescue her out of My hand. 11: "I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths And all her festal assemblies. 12: "I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. 13: "I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD."

In chapter 4, a clear warning is also given. Note the similarity to the direction the United States is heading. Read chapter 4.

Chapter 5 continues the warning and extends it to Judah, the southern kingdom. Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 also continue the warning, telling Israel the reasons God will allow her no more children and that her barrenness is coming and how His heart is broken over her rejection of Him. But we see also that a nation that disavows God and refuses to obey God (while at the same time acknowledging Him) will fall - based not on God's desire that they fall, but because they will not heed Him nor obey His voice. It is like parents warning their children time after time not to walk away with strangers no matter what. Yet how many children do so anyway? The history of man is the history of hard heartedness, stubbornness and foolishness.

So warned, what did Gomer do? What was the decision of Israel?

Living in a home with a godly husband who provided for her and the family, in a secure and peaceful environment, safe from the ravages of the world was not satisfactory to Gomer. So in spite of the warnings that she would be completely abused and used up by her admirers, (as chapter 7 relates) and in her self confident stupidity Gomer left her husband and three children to return to her lovers of old.

Soon, like Israel, she was rendered haggard and unwanted. We know that though Israel was prosperous and secure at the time of Hosea's prophecy. It would only be twenty-five years until Israel ceased to exist. One of her own allies (or lovers), Assyria, sent armies to Israel and destroyed her. The reason was simple. Israel grew tired of paying the enormous cost of having the protection of the Assyrian alliance. So they refused to pay. Then they went first to Judah and then to Egypt to get help in breaking off with Assyria. Both Judah and Egypt were in no position to help and said "sorry". Israel was then attacked by Assyria and the nation destroyed. Assyria's way of doing this is historically unique. It simply took the majority of her population, placed them in carts or in forced marches, and dispersed them all over Mesopotamia, what is now modern Turkey, and all points east and west.

So is this how Gomer's story ends?

Before the destruction of Israel by Assyria, there was in the life of Hosea and Gomer an event so astonishing that it should stun us into realizing that our God is not like any other God and that the Bible is indeed His truth. This event portrayed not only God's ultimate mercy on Israel, but on all mankind.

First, let's note that God was well aware of what was going to happen to Israel. Israel would no longer exist as a nation, but the Assyrian way of dissolving a nation was unique to history. So God told Hosea to tell the people the following. Look at 6:1-3.

1: "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us; He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage us. 2: "He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him. 3: "So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth."

Did you take note of the three days mentioned when God will raise Israel up? We'll come back to that in a moment. Keep it in mind. Meanwhile, what happened between Gomer and Hosea?

After Gomer left Hosea and her three children to find her old lovers and the so called pleasures of this world, it wasn't long before she began to be shunned for the younger and more attractive women. From the text we will see in a moment it has been surmised that in order to survive, she once again sold herself to owners who found out that she was no longer an asset to them but a liability. So they put her on an auction block to try to recoup anything at all from her by selling her to someone else. But there were no buyers. No one wanted the used and haggard Gomer any longer. No one that is except one man. And so a single bid was offered for her, fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. This was a small amount indeed, about \$25.00 total in today's money. The man who bought her was Hosea himself.

In chapter three, a chapter of only five verses, we read the first two which state,

1: Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and

love raisin cakes." 2: So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver and a homer and a half of barley.

So Hosea took the rejected Gomer home, having paid the price for her redemption. This pictures the love of God as no other piece of literature can do. We see God's identical love in Christ as He pays the price for our redemption. You see, we are Gomer also. And as God promised to raise up Israel in three days, the figurative speech is literally fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. Once they got home, chapter three, 3-5 tell us Hosea's counsel, which is the same as God's to His people. Now, 3-5,

3: Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." 4: For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols. 5: Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

The "last days". We are in those last days which began when Jesus rose from the dead as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And now we see how the love and mercy of God makes the ultimate provision for His people so his promises will be fulfilled in a book written 750 years before the fulfillment was complete.

We will finish the story of Hosea and Gomer next week with an exciting conclusion.

LESSON V

Today we will conclude the story of Hosea and Gomer told to us by the Lord in the Book of the prophet Hosea, who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel in 750 B.C. and during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah..

To recap briefly, Hosea was instructed by God to marry a prostitute and take her to his home. The marriage and its unfolding drama became the portrait of a loving God and His people Israel, who had, like Gomer, become spiritual adulterers. Israel, forsaking the Lord, turned to the idols of Canaan and many foreign powers with which she had formed alliances hoping to secure her own wealth and security. However, these alliances, especially with the dominate world power of Hosea's day, Assyria, became burdensome to Israel and she attempted to break away through refusing to pay the heavy taxes Assyria demanded. Israel did not seek the counsel and help of the Lord, but appealed instead to Judah and Egypt for military assistance against the looming threat of an Assyrian invasion. But Egypt and Judah were in no position to assist and refused to get involved.

Israel had been in the grip of Assyrian dominance for over a hundred years. There is a rare sight in an Iraqi museum. The black obelisk of Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria a hundred years before Hosea's day, depicts in relief the Israelite king Jehu bowing before him in humility with thirteen Israeli porters offering tribute of silver and golden bowls, goblets and so on. This homage to the Assyrian kings is well noted in the prophet's message. Selected passages of Hosea chapter five reveal the word of the Lord regarding Israel's adultery.

5:3-5, 7, 11, 13, 14-15, 3: "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; For now, O Ephraim, you have played the harlot, Israel has defiled itself. 4: Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, And they do not know the LORD. 5: Moreover, the pride of Israel testifies against him, And Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also has stumbled with them. 7: They have dealt treacherously against the LORD, For they have borne illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their land. 11: Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, Because he was determined to follow *man's* command. 13: When Ephraim saw his sickness, And Judah his wound, Then Ephraim went to Assyria And sent to King Jareb. But he is unable to heal you, Or to cure you of your wound. 14: For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver. 15: I will go away *and* return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."

Gomer portrays this tragic history in her own life and in her marriage to Hosea. She bore him a son, Jezreel, named by the Lord for the previous destruction of the Israeli leadership in the Valley of Jezreel. So the boy became a warning and a prophecy of things to come if Israel didn't repent. But Gomer, like Israel left her husband and son and sought out her old lovers. She became pregnant with a daughter not of Hosea her husband, and God had Hosea name her "un-pitied". After weaning "Lo-Ruhamah", Gomer left Hosea again to return to her own crowd and once again was found pregnant with another child not of Hosea. God had Hosea name the boy

“Lo-Ammi” meaning “not my people”.

The children portray the fruit of spiritual adultery and idolatry and all its attendant immorality, debauchery, and every kind of evil including human sacrifice. The story of God’s people sinking into the pattern of a ungodly and disgusting society is as contemporary as it is historical. The same is true of nations and empires who after achieving wealth and security sink into decay from within and crumble. We see this pattern in our own country and the acceleration of the decay is startling, and solutions offered by politicians and candidates are numbingly ignorant. Finally, we see the corruption of the society copied by the church and its people, both in former times and in present times. The children of Gomer are the fruit of her adultery and the portrait of how the fruit of disobedience to God brings shame and destruction upon the nation as well as the people of God. Even the faithful people of God are snagged in the temporal mess and brought to ruin.

The purpose of this study is to challenge us to make choices that will preserve our relationship with God in righteousness - in the midst of a world, and often teachings from pulpits across this land that tempt us to engage in the worst and most self-centered seeking for our own pleasures at the expense of what we know to be God’s clear will for our lives.

Sometimes I hear people ask, “What is God’s will for my life?” We recently received an e-mail from our nephew asking the same question. He is confused about what God wants him to do with his life. He is thinking, like so many dedicated young Christians in terms of vocation and type of service. Yet God is more interested in who we are than in what we do. Because it is who we become that determines how we will serve God in whatever we come to do. Some think of service to God in terms of doing, not being.

A contemporary of Hosea, the prophet Micah who also prophesied the destruction of Israel, simply put it this way.

Micah 6:6-8, 6: “With what shall I come to the LORD *And* bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? 7: Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8: He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?”

In a similar fashion, Jesus said it this way in answer to the question,

Matthew 22:36-40, 36: "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38: "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39: "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40: "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Both passages mention the importance of love. To be a person of love is not a “do” but a “be”.

But back to Hosea and Gomer. Even with the birth of three children, Gomer rather than nurturing her children went whoring off again. Another picture of Israel. But this time as Gomer sunk back into debauchery, she found herself undesirable and sold herself back into prostitution just to survive. It didn't help as her owners found her to be a liability rather than an asset. Now unprofitable to her slave owners, she was taken to the auction block to be sold. But there were no buyers, except one. The account is given in chapter three.

3:1 "Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." 2: So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver and a homer and a half of barley."

So Hosea bought Gomer for the equivalent of \$25.00 and took her home having paid the price for her redemption in more ways than just the auction amount. He had sacrificed his life for this woman and her children of adultery. This pictures the love of God as no other piece of literature can do. We see God's identical love in Christ as He pays the price for our redemption. You see, we are Gomer also. And as God promised to raise up Israel in three days, the figurative speech is literally fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. Once they got home, chapter three, 3:3 tell us Hosea's counsel, which is the same as God's to His people.

3: "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." Her drive to find fulfillment in sex will be denied her and she will need to be in a state of detention until such time as it is deemed appropriate to resume marital relations.

God defines this and applies it to Israel in verses 4 and 5,

4: For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols. 5: Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

The last days began at the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Last week we noted God telling the people through Hosea the following. 6:1-3:

1: "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us; He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage us. 2: "He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him. 3: "So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth."

The principal theme in the Bible is that of redemption, and for the redeemed, the principal theme is restoration. In spite of the destruction of Israel as a nation, which also took the faithful people of God into dispersion - as Babylon took Judah's faithful to Babylon 150 years later, God promised not only redemption for all mankind but a restored kingdom for those faithful who suffered even to death for the name of the Lord. Note 1:10-11,

10: "Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "*You are* the sons of the living God." 11: And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel."

Hosea 2:13-23,

13: "I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD. 14: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness And speak kindly to her. 15: "Then I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. 16: "It will come about in that day," declares the LORD, "That you will call Me Ishi And will no longer call Me Baali. 17: "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more. 18: "In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky And the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety. 19: "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, 20: And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD. 21: "It will come about in that day that I will respond," declares the LORD. "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, 22: And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil, And they will respond to Jezreel. 23: "I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, '*You are my God!*'"

So, in spite of her adulteries, God will gather her faithful descendants back together in a restored kingdom under one king where the people will no longer be called "Not my people" but be called "The sons of the living God". In that day great will be the "day of Jezreel". In Biblical prophecy, the ultimate fulfillment of that prediction occurs when Jesus returns to the earth in battle mode and destroys all the enemies of God and establishes His kingdom permanently and forever. That battle will take place at a place in the valley of Jezreel at Megiddo, or Armageddon which is Hebrew for the valley of Megiddo.

But what about restoration for those people of God today who have fallen into terrible sin or have simply walked away from the Lord to follow their own path or the path of mankind? God offers restoration to all who would humbly come to Him. In chapter fourteen, the final chapter in the book we read these words, 14:1-9:

1: Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
2: Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity And receive *us* graciously, That we may present the fruit of our lips. 3: "Assyria will not save us, We will not ride on horses; Nor will we say again, 'Our god,' To the work of our hands; For

in You the orphan finds mercy." 4: I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them. 5: I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, And he will take root like *the cedars of Lebanon*. 6: His shoots will sprout, And his beauty will be like the olive tree And his fragrance like *the cedars of Lebanon*. 7: Those who live in his shadow Will again raise grain, And they will blossom like the vine. His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon. 8: O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; From Me comes your fruit. 9: Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *Whoever* is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble in them."

There are many thought provoking lessons in the relationship, all of which the Holy Spirit can apply to our lives.

1. Though God loves us dearly, we will suffer the consequences of our decisions and choices and so we need to make good ones based on the counsel of the Lord.
2. We need to steel ourselves against the seductions of this world making godly choices for our lives and families even if those choices result in persecution or suffering.
3. In spite of those choices to follow the Lord and cling to Him, we will not be exempt from being swept away with the destruction of our society - except hopefully – in its debauchery, whining, blaming, and bitterness. Instead, we will have the opportunity to be bright lights to the dying world in which we live.
4. But if we succumb or have succumbed to the seduction of the world but realize our stupidity and our sin, God is more than willing to welcome us back as we come to Him with our regret and shame, recognizing and confessing our shameful ways. This is the magnificence of His grace, purchased on our behalf by Jesus on the cross. Yes, there is restoration of all good things in the future kingdom, but there is also restoration today for those individuals who would desire it. But would we then continue in sin that grace might abound? Absolutely not. Grace is not a cleansing just so we can get filthy again. Grace has a color. And the color is of blood, red and to abuse grace is to trample on Jesus' blood, accounting it as dirt.

So, the matter is presented before us. Will we make the firm decision to follow the Lord and be faithful to Him no matter what the circumstances or temptations and thankfully share in that great victory, or will we be swept away into the alluring lusts and glimmering promises of the world? "In spiritual matters, weakness and defeat are not the result of circumstances, but of choices." What choices will you be making while this once great nation goes the way of ancient Israel, and of Gomer the harlot?

If you are in need of restoration today it is available to you, but be careful that you don't take His grace lightly. God's grace on our behalf cost Him everything. We also must be willing, with His help, to have the courage thereafter take up His cross and follow Him.