

# GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

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## CHAPTER TWENTY

### GOMER

(Hosea)

A PREACHER'S WIFE can either help or hinder him. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Spirit of God stipulates the qualification of an elder or a deacon in the church, He requires the wife to be dignified, not one to speak evil of others, thoroughly trustworthy, ruling their children and their own houses well.

The elder's children were to be believers, free from every reproach of profligacy or of disorderliness. Every servant of the Lord should have a sincere love for people, and genuine sympathy for, and understanding of others if his message is to be effective. A preacher is called on every day to minister comfort and encouragement to the sorrowing, the tried, and the erring. He learns to comfort as he himself is comforted by God.

God had a great sorrow. He had lavished His love and care on the children of Israel, the people He had chosen, and they turned their backs on Him. It was a case of unrequited love. Yet His great heart yearned over them. From the depths of His soul He cried: **"How shall I give thee up? . . . mine heart is turned within me . . . for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee"** (11:8, 9). How could the Lord reach these people?

He decided to send Hosea to the school of domestic tragedy and disappointment so that he could speak for Him out of a full heart to these irresponsive people.

Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah who was a nephew of King Uzziah. As Hosea looked back on his life, he saw God's hand in his training through his own bitter experience. He had fallen in love with Gomer, a court favorite, who was well known for her infidelities. God commanded him to marry her. Perhaps he thought this gay, attractive woman would settle down with him and be helpful as he sought to reach those in higher society. Though possessed of physical charms and the social graces, she was utterly selfish and very eager for the attention of other men.

A child came to bless their home, a little son whom God named Jezreel. Hosea dared to hope that, with this new interest in the home, he would have Gomer to himself, and she would find pleasure in their common interest. But she was restless, felt tied down with the child, and the life of a preacher's wife was utterly dull and boring to her.

People constantly coming with their troubles to his home made her exceedingly depressed. She couldn't stand it; furthermore, she wouldn't. She was often absent from home and Hosea was left to his ministry and the care of little Jezreel. His days and nights were lonely, and disappointment filled his heart! Gomer said she must live her own life. How he would pray for his gallivanting wife! There were plenty of occasions for folk to speak reproachfully of his home life! He would blush with shame when people inquired for her.

When Gomer was to have her second child, a daughter, she came home to be cared for, and Hosea welcomed her. She seemed repentant, but her goodness was **“as the early dew it goeth away”** (6:4).

Hosea knew the child was not his, yet he still hungered for Gomer's love and companionship. God told him to call the child Loruhamah meaning unloved and unpitied. Her father was unknown, and she was orphaned, not by death, but by her mother's sin. Gomer stayed home until “Unpitied” was old enough to be weaned, then the old restlessness seized her, and off she went again, leaving Hosea with two babies to care for.

He had dared to hope that a baby girl, as well as their little son in the home, would be enough to fill any woman's heart and hands. But fresh disappointment awaited him.

Again she returned to find the latch outside of the door. She seemed never to question the undeserved constancy of her devoted husband. She was like the prodigal who did not question the reception that would await him from his father. **“I will arise and go to my father.”** She arrived to have her third baby, a son. God again spoke to Hosea and said, **“Call him Loammi,”** meaning not my people or no kin of mine.

We might well ask, How could he take her in again? Why didn't he divorce her? His heart was hungry for love. He never gave up the hope that she would feel the need for him. He, like the father, ran to welcome the returning prodigal at the first sign of repentance.

As he thought of his own sorrow, he recalled how many broken homes there were in Israel, for where the Lord is not honored, morals deteriorate, sin and discord enter.

Then suddenly it came to him, God must feel as I do when I prove fickle toward Him and run after other attractions and desert Him. But does He welcome me back? Yes!

We hear the words of love,  
We gaze upon the blood,  
We see the mighty sacrifice,  
And we have peace with God.

'Tis everlasting peace!  
Sure as Jehovah's Name;  
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne,  
For evermore the same.

Our love is oftentimes low,  
Our joy still ebbs and flows;  
But peace with Him remains the same,  
No change Jehovah knows.

We change—He changes not,  
Our Christ can never die;  
His love, not ours, the resting place,  
We on His truth rely.

— *Little Flock*

Instead of becoming bitter and cynical through this distressing experience, Hosea learned something of the unwearying patience of God with His own. A prophet is one who speaks for God. Graduating from this hard school, he came out a prophet of God.

The two younger children were foisted upon him and perhaps at first he felt resentful, yet as he cared for them, a deep compassion and love for them filled his heart, and he determined to adopt them and rename them. Instead of calling the little son, “**Not my people,**” by the grace that God wrought in his heart, he called him, “**My people.**” How that must have cheered his little heart—to have someone really love him—one to whom he now belonged! Then little “**No mercy**” had her name changed to “**Mercy.**” We will hope the children’s response to his affection made up in a little measure for the lack of devotion from their mother. He called the children, whom he had so lovingly adopted, to go and plead with their mother to return home.

But she had grown worse and worse and was deaf even to the entreaties of her children. She brazenly boasted of her lovers, and of their admiration for her, and their material gifts to her. But the truth was she had dissipated all that a loving husband had lavished on her. At last Hosea concluded that he could only leave her alone until she learned through the bitterness of disappointment that sin bears only bitter fruit. There came a day too when God said, “**Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.**”

It is a serious business when God says “**Let him alone.**” Again the Lord says: “**My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water . . . Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God**” (Jeremiah 2:13, 19). But Gomer was as stubborn as a backsliding heifer.

So Hosea let her alone to eat the fruit of her own ways.

Just so the Lord says to those who constantly reject His overtures: “**I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.**” And they will say: “**Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up**” (5:15-6:1).

Headstrong Gomer refused the entreaties of her children and husband. Then she found herself spurned, despised, and forsaken by those she thought were her admiring and devoted friends. She was cast off like an old shoe. Whenever she pursued them, they avoided her. Then, not till then, did she come to herself, like the prodigal, and said: **“I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now”** (2:7).

Did Hosea receive her? All her sparkling attractiveness was gone. Her mirth had departed; she looked like a vine that had been torn by beasts; all the adornments of which she was so proud were missing. She was a disillusioned creature that returned to the prophet. But the prophet made up his mind that if there was restoration, this time there should be a definite understanding. He took her away from her old environment and reasoned the whole situation out with her. He did not drive her, but sought to make her desolation and trouble turn to blessing. **“I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her”** (2:14). **“The valley of trouble shall be a door of hope.”**

A godless English gentleman was stricken with paralysis when thrown from his horse while jumping a hurdle. He was very bitter against the Lord for some time and cursed Him, until one day he learned that the Lord loved him, and Christ died for him. He yielded to Him with joy and learned to speak of his affliction as his “dear paralysis,” as it brought him to know the Lord. His valley of trouble became his door of hope.

Hosea determined that Gomer should understand the grounds on which he would receive her back. There was to be no more fluctuation. **“I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness,”** it was to be a “holy matrimony.”

“In judgment” God is a just God and a Saviour. When Gomer was truly united to Hosea, he proved to be her savior. **“In lovingkindness”**—some kindnesses embarrass one, but this is kindness with love.

Adam Clark Smith translates this beautifully as “leal love.” Scotland is the land of the leal or loyal. The Lord expects loyal love from us for Himself. The same expression is used in 6:6: **“I desired mercy [leal love] and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”** He craves intimacy with Himself. **“And in tender mercies”**—His mercies are multiplied toward us. You recall His appeal in Romans 12:1: **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”**

**“I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord”** (2:20).

What they enjoyed together would be with the Lord. All this Hosea planned in the restoration of Gomer. But where was she now? Where would he find her?

God sent him out to hunt for her, saying, **“Go love her . . . according to my love to the children of Israel.”**

We are to love as Christ has loved us.

Where did Hosea find her? She was on the auction block of the slave dealer. The bids were offered. She was a slave indeed, she had sold herself to sin, and a hard taskmaster she found him. All she had was food that the swine did eat, she had been stripped. A good slave would bring thirty pieces of silver, the price at which our Lord was valued. But she was offered at half-price and a day's ration. Who would want her? Only one who loved her. The Lord picks up the Devil's castaways.

Hosea paid the price, took her to his heart, telling her he expected leal love from her, so he would offer leal love to her. Such restoration caused her to sing as in the days of her youth. What music was in those words when she said, "**Ishi** [My husband]"!

After this experience Hosea preached powerfully to the people on the unchanging love of God.

Let us read the last chapter as Hosea pleads:

**"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips"** (14: 1, 2).

**"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon"** (14:4, 5).

**"They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."** Ephraim shall say, **"What have I to do any more with idols?"** (14:7, 8).

I answer him: **"From me is thy fruit found Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them"** (14: 8,9).

Ours is a pardoning God! **"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"** (Isaiah 55:6, 7).

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