

## The Necessity of Worship

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In the previous study, we discussed how Hosea is a confrontation regarding idolatry and faithfulness to God, a call to repentance, a statement of God's righteousness judgment against unfaithfulness, yet it is a brilliant and amazing picture of God's unfailing love. God's love does not fail in the face of our persistent unfaithfulness. God's love continues to move toward us, His own people, and what a thrill that is.

As we studied Hosea 1, we saw how God commanded Hosea, this pure, righteous prophet of His, to marry a prostitute, so that Hosea's life, his marriage and his family, would be a sermon to the Nation and a confrontation to the Nation about their unfaithfulness to God and their need to turn. That is the context and we continue this biographical section of Hosea, chapters one through three.

God is calling the Nation and the people back to true worship through Hosea, his life, and his ministry.

Scriptural Text: Hosea 2, ESV

### Israel's Unfaithfulness Punished

- <sup>1</sup> Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy."
- <sup>2</sup> "Plead with your mother, plead—  
for she is not my wife,  
and I am not her husband—  
that she put away her whoring from her face,  
and her adultery from between her breasts;  
<sup>3</sup> lest I strip her naked  
and make her as in the day she was born,  
and make her like a wilderness,  
and make her like a parched land,  
and kill her with thirst.  
<sup>4</sup> Upon her children also I will have no mercy,  
because they are children of whoredom.  
<sup>5</sup> For their mother has played the whore;  
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.'  
<sup>6</sup> Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns,  
and I will build a wall against her,  
so that she cannot find her paths.  
<sup>7</sup> She shall pursue her lovers  
but not overtake them,  
and she shall seek them  
but shall not find them.  
Then she shall say,  
'I will go and return to my first husband,  
for it was better for me than now.'  
<sup>8</sup> And she did not know  
that it was I who gave her  
the grain, the wine, and the oil,  
and who lavished on her silver and gold,  
which they used for Baal.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore I will take back  
my grain in its time,  
and my wine in its season,  
and I will take away my wool and my flax,  
which were to cover her nakedness.  
<sup>10</sup> Now I will uncover her lewdness  
in the sight of her lovers,  
and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.  
<sup>11</sup> And I will put an end to all her mirth,  
her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths,  
and all her appointed feasts.  
<sup>12</sup> And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,  
of which she said,  
'These are my wages,  
which my lovers have given me.'  
I will make them a forest,  
and the beasts of the field shall devour them.  
<sup>13</sup> And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals  
when she burned offerings to them  
and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry,  
and went after her lovers  
and forgot me, declares the LORD.
- ### The LORD's Mercy on Israel
- <sup>14</sup> "Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
and bring her into the wilderness,  
and speak tenderly to her.  
<sup>15</sup> And there I will give her her vineyards  
and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.  
And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,  
as at the time when she came out of the land of  
Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’  
<sup>17</sup> For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. <sup>18</sup> And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. <sup>19</sup> And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. <sup>20</sup> I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD,  
I will answer the heavens,  
and they shall answer the earth,  
<sup>22</sup> and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and  
the oil,  
and they shall answer Jezreel,

<sup>23</sup> and I will sow her for myself in the land.  
And I will have mercy on No Mercy,  
and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my  
people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”

What is God like? Jot down in your mind some attributes which come to your mind when you think about God. It is likely, as you are making that list, you are noting attributes such as “gracious,” “loving,” “merciful,” “righteous,” “holy,” “sovereign,” “eternal,” “all-powerful,” “all-knowing,” “ever-present,” “faithful,” “wise,” “good,” “forgiving,” “true.” Were these some of the thoughts you had as you began making a list of who God is and what He is like?

There is one central attribute of God which is often forgotten however. It is often left off of lists and if given an hour many would not put this attribute on the list. It is an attribute which we may even wonder whether it is worthy of God and that is the attribute “jealous.” God is a jealous God. He is a God who will not tolerate competing with other gods for our attention, our allegiance, and our worship. He is jealous. He is zealous for the glory of His own name. He is zealous for faithfulness in our relationship with Him.

When God revealed Himself to Israel, as He delivered them out of their slavery in Egypt, He let them know He would not tolerate them fooling around with any other God. As Moses presents these ten words, The Ten Commandments, that come down from God from Mount Sinai to Israel, the first two commandments relate to God’s jealousy,

Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God...”

God is not embarrassed by His jealousy. He repeatedly goes on public record teaching us He is jealous. He is not trying to hide this fact. He wants us to understand He is jealous. In Exodus 34, this is what God says,

<sup>14</sup> (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)

God’s jealousy is one of the first attributes God teaches us about Himself in sacred Scripture. Jealousy is so central to God’s person He introduces this attribute to His people before He introduces many other attributes He eventually reveals about Himself to them. God’s jealousy is of great practical importance. It is so practical important, He uses it as a foundation for the ten big rules of living life, the ten big rules to maintain a right relationship with God and with one another.

God’s jealousy is an attribute that makes a practical difference in our daily life and that is the reason why it is so important for us to keep God’s jealousy in mind. Yet, we often consider jealousy to be a vice rather than a virtue. The natural question for some to ask is: Is it righteous for God to be jealous? Certainly, God is not jealous with the kind of jealousy that is envious or malicious or mean. Perhaps we have such difficulty understanding God’s jealousy because we think of the sinful ways man exhibits jealousy, a kind of jealousy often filled with irrational fury. No, God’s jealousy is a holy jealousy, one that is zealous to protect a love relationship. It is the fruit of covenantal commitments.

For example, a husband who sits idly by while his wife is wooed away by another man is not a loving husband. A holy jealousy works to protect that cherished relationship, to keep other lovers from being successful and to hold onto to their beloved. Holy jealousy cherishes the marital relationship and commitment. This is the kind of jealousy God has

toward His people. God purposes that His people will be in loving relationship with Himself throughout human history and on into eternity and He will not allow His people to be wooed away without a righteous response. He expects us to be faithful and loyal. He betrothed us. He is jealous for His name. He is jealous for His relationship with us. Both the glory of God's name and our relationship with God are diminished as we act unfaithfully and God responds.

What does God's jealousy lead God to do in the face of our unfaithfulness? There are two actions Scripture repeatedly shares with us God takes in the face of our unfaithfulness. First, God will act to judge unfaithfulness so it will not spread. He does not want more people to become unfaithful so He judges it. Second, God will act to preserve our relationship with Him. He acts in love and in kindness to draw us back to Himself. He confronts and He disciplines us for the purpose of leading us back into a right relationship. Consider what John Calvin writes about God's jealousy, "As the purer and chaster a husband is the more grievously he is offended when he sees his wife inclined to a rival. So, the Lord, who has betrothed us to Himself in truth, declares He burns with the hottest jealousy whenever neglecting the purity of His holy marriage we defile ourselves with abominable lust and especially when the worship of His deity is transferred to another." God burns with the hottest jealousy when we pursue our own fleshly, wicked desires and when we transfer the worship intended to be given to God to some other deity, some other god, in our life.

In this study we read Hosea the Prophet's word in light of God's jealous love for His people. Hosea is commanded by God to marry a prostitute, a woman who is unfaithful from the beginning and who continues to be unfaithful throughout his marriage to her. Hosea's marriage and family will be a sermon to Israel. God designs for Hosea's family life to be a message of confrontation to a Nation who is unfaithful. Hosea will represent God in his faithful love and Gomer, Hosea's wife, will represent Israel in her unfaithful ways.

God says to Hosea, "I want you to confront Israel, this people, individuals and the community together, regarding their unfaithfulness to Me. I want you to confront them through the choice of a wife. You will represent Me. Your bride will represent this Nation. You will be pure and faithful and patient and loving. She will be impure, unfaithful, resentful, and dishonoring. Everyday you live you will communicate through your family My jealous anger at this people's sin as well as my faithful love in pursuing them." God continues this message of confrontation in Chapter 2, our text in this study.

God specifically bears down upon Israel's false worship. Israel had not abandoned her worship of YEHWEH altogether, but Israel did mix in the worship of Baal's, of false gods, along with the worship of YEHWEH the True God, and in so doing **the Nation wholly departure from true worship.**

Syncretism in worship is as offensive to God as adultery is as offensive to a faithful spouse. Syncretism is the union of different religions, of different gods, mixing in the worship of one god with the worship of another god. Today our culture views syncretism as the path to peace, the path to harmony among mankind in this war-ridden world. So, a person take a little bit of Buddhist philosophy, add in some Jewish songs, throw in a bit of Hindu reincarnation, and top it off with some Muslim prayers as well as a few Christian rituals, one would have a sophisticated, evolved experience. That is what our world says, but this is not God's perspective.

This is what God says in Isaiah,

<sup>42:8</sup> I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

<sup>48:11</sup> For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

There are two motivations in God's jealousy at work. The first is the passion for His own name. The second is the love for His people. Isaiah parks on this idea of God being passionate for His own name. That is why He is jealous and why He will not allow us to mix the worship of YEHWEH with the worship of other gods. This is why it is so horribly offensive to Him.

Imagine for a moment, as Hosea confronts his wife Gomer, about her unfaithfulness and her adultery, "Gomer, you have to stop! You have to stop sleeping with these other men." Gomer responds to Hosea, her faithful husband, "But, Hosea, indeed I may be sleeping with other men, but I still sleep with you, too." How is Hosea to respond to that? Is

that a consolation? Do you believe that answer would console any husband who desires for the marriage to be whole? No, the truth is, God is right to be angry when we mix our worship of Him with other gods. It is not, “Okay, it is true I go after other gods, the gods of money, sex, self-acclaim, and self-exaltation. It is true I may have a bit of a problem going after these other gods, but, God, I still come on Sunday and I still worship You.” God hears that just like Hosea would hear Gomer, but God is a jealous God. Jesus tells us,

Matthew 6:24 “*No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*”

As we study Hosea and Chapter 2, we have the right to ask our self the question, “Do I worship other gods along with the God of the Bible? Do I worship the gods of our culture: money, sex, and self?”

When the Pharisees heard Jesus say this, they ridiculed Him. False worshippers hate to be confronted with the wickedness of their idols. True worshippers long to discover how they can be more faithful and true to the Living God. We must ask our self, “Is God pleased with my loyalty to Him? Does my worship reflect a love for God that is whole-hearted and jealous, or does my worship of YEHWEH, the True God, reflect a heart that is half-hearted; it has some love for God, but it also has a lot of love for these other gods that woo me?”

<sup>2</sup> “Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband—that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts;

We must remember this book is not about Hosea’s family so much as it is using Hosea’s family as a sermon, a picture, for us. In this verse, Hosea is saying to his grown children, “Plead with you mom to stop going after these other guys. Plead with your mom to come back home and establish herself here, the love of this home, so we can enjoy the home God intended for us to enjoy right here.”

This is a message, of course, to both individuals as well as the community at large in Israel to love God. What God is saying is, in Verse 2, he is telling those who are faithful to God, those who are true worshippers, true sons and daughters of God, to go and plead with others in the church who profess to worship Me, plead with them to stop committing adultery. It is the responsibility of faithful worshippers not only to faithfully worship, but it is the responsibility of faithful worshippers to plead with our own generation to become faithful to God and to speak on behalf of God and communicate His case to others.

What are they to say? They are to tell them God is turning His back on those who are unfaithful; “She is not my wife and I am not her husband.” This is the language of separation and the dissolution of the marriage bond. He is warning the individuals of the Nation they might be cut off forever if they do not repent. He is saying, “Call the unfaithful to put away false worships and their sins and return to God in faithfulness and worship.”

The application for Verse 2, to be drawn for all of us, is it is not enough for us to be faithful to God in the time in which the rest of Jesus’ church is unfaithful to God. I believe we live in an age during with the church of Jesus is incredibly unfaithful. There may not be literal Baal statues being raised in sanctuaries, although it is close to that, but the church of Jesus Christ is worshipping Baal openly as well as discretely. It is not enough for faithful worshippers to say, “I am going to be the faithful one.” That is typical and it is good to do, but it is not enough. God calls us to plead His case before our own generation and plead with unfaithful members of Jesus’ church to put away their sins which keep them from loving God and turn back to God with a whole heart. That is a tough task and an unpopular thing to do.

I have had some whom, after I have plead with them to turn away from their unfaithfulness and these other gods, to refuse to talk with me and have cut off relationships. Some were very close in my life. I pleaded with them to turn from their unfaithfulness. Beloved, if you are a faithful worshipper of God, God is calling you to do the work of pleading with other professing believers. Again, I do not believe he is talking about pleading with the people of the world who never have any connection to YEHWEH, but he is talking about people who say, “Yes, I am a worshipper of YEHWEH, a worshipper of the true and Living God.” When we see those folks and we see god’s raising up and being obeyed and worshipped, God calls you and me to plead with them to turn from their idolatry and commit themselves wholly to the Lord. I believe one reason the church in our nation is so spiritually weak is because faithful believers are unwilling to plead with unfaithful believers to stop their idolatry. We are simply unwilling and we are

not going to do that. Yet, over and over again, God commands us to do this. It is here in Hosea 2:2 and another verse is in Galatians 6,

<sup>1</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Yes, when we go to plead with them regarding their unfaithfulness, we do so with gentleness and humility, but we do so, still, with boldness and forthrightness. Love demands we warn others in the church family of God's righteous response to false worship. God's righteous response is,

<sup>3</sup> lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst. <sup>4</sup> Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom. <sup>5a</sup> For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers...'

"Going after her lovers," is her conscience pursuit and there is an application to Gomer and to the Nation. He will bring famine, drought, and pestilence upon her children. How long does God wait before He takes punitive action against a people who are unfaithful to Him? Sometimes God executes His punishment, His discipline, and His justice quickly, but sometimes He is very, very slow.

Hosea begins prophesying underneath King Jeroboam II reign. King Jeroboam reigns for forty-one years and all throughout the reign of Jeroboam II, the Nation enjoys a good bit of prosperity and peace. There are no foreign enemies who are threatening her borders. All is reasonably well throughout Jeroboam's entire reign. If there is such peace and prosperity, this must mean King Jeroboam II must have been a pretty nice and righteous king, right? Wrong! Consider what II Kings 14 says about King Jeroboam II,

<sup>24</sup> And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Why did not God cut off this wicked king after one year? I do not know. God's ways are higher than my ways. He allowed Jeroboam to be prosperous as a king for his entire reign until he died and, like everyone else, he faced the Judgment. But, if we look on the outside, we must think, "Well, God must be pleased because they are prosperous and they are at peace." Beloved, we should not interpret our present prosperity as God's pleasure with us. While outwardly prosperous, the Nation was inwardly declining and I believe that is where we are today in our country and in the church in the United States.

Spiritual unfaithfulness was acting like a worm inside of an apple. The outside of the apple looked pristine. It was glowing, red, shiny, and wonderful. But, if we cut into that apple, the worm had eaten it from the inside so that it was wholly black and corrupt and decayed. What did Israel do in their unfaithfulness? She said, "I will go after my lovers." I believe this is where the church in the United States often is. I know we should not worship the gods of money, sex, and self, but these are the gods who actually make us happy. They give us our bread and our water and our wool and our flax and our oil and our drink. Here is God's response,

<sup>13</sup> "And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD."

That is the problem. She went after other lovers. She assigned to them the physical blessings she was receiving. She forgot the Lord. There are three specific sins which Israel is doing in their unfaithfulness to the Lord. First, they committed the sin of pursuing other gods. They said, "I know God wants me to worship Him alone, but I am going to worship other gods as well. I will still worship YEHWEH, but I am going to worship other gods."

Friends, if we pursue anything other than God we commit this same sin in our pursuit, in our worship, and in our actions. If we love anything more than we love God or in the same measure in which we love God, we commit this sin.

The second sin is the sin of believing other gods bring happiness and prosperity. Gomer said Baal is a fertility god. What took place in the worship of Baal was very gross and wicked. They had Temple prostitutes. There was a belief that if they gave Baal worship, what he wants, he will give them what they wanted. This was a barter system of worship. They would go to the Temple and have sexual relations with these prostitutes, thus pleasing Baal, then Baal, in return, would have sexual relations with the ground and the ground would produce fruit so that the crops would be great and the livestock would also reproduce. They believed he created the ground and the livestock to become fertile. They believed if they worshipped him, he would bless them and that is what Gomer believed. They believed Baal was the one who made them prosperous. Worship was given to Baal as barter for provisions. The people in Israel worshipped Baal for the purpose of becoming materially prosperous.

This is not too far from the present day prosperity teachers we see on television teaching a corrupted Gospel, motivating people to worship God by promising material wealth if they do. There is an exhaustive list of things He wants us to do and if we do them, there is a promise of what God will give us in return. This is a barter system.

Prosperity theology is taught in the Bible. Did you know that. It is taught, but it is taught by Baal. It is not taught by YEHWEH. Nothing could further from the truth in that God presents a health and wealth gospel. Nothing could be further from the truth. The worship of false gods brought into the church brings in this idea. God offers us His life freely through faith in His Son Jesus and never through a bartering system.

To God, this false worship is like a wife flaunting a new necklace in front of her husband and saying, "This is what my lover gave me." She is saying, "My Baals have given me my food, my oil, my wine, my flax, and my clothing." All the while she has forgotten it was her husband who actually gave her the necklace. That is the grave, sobering picture God is laying upon our hearts.

The third sin is the sin of simply forgetting God. They lived their lives as though God was not present. There are no conscience thoughts of Him throughout their days. It may have been when they went to the Temple. It may have been when they met together, but otherwise there was no real consciousness of YEHWEH. There was no listening to His voice on a daily basis. There was no looking to Him for counsel and decisions to be made in their life. There was no praise for His constant care and kindness. There was no central place of God in their time and in their focus. God is largely set aside, neglected, and forgotten. God is upset when He gets placed in the corners of their lives. He does not abide being taken out, occasionally, on Sunday and forgotten the rest of the week.

Where are you in reference to these sins of unfaithfulness Israel is committing? Do you sin by pursuing other gods? Do you sin by believing other gods will make you happy if you continue to feed them? Do you sin by forgetting God throughout your week, living with no conscience thought of His presence?

**The second necessity of true worship is a display of God's loving discipline.** What will God do in His response?

<sup>6</sup>"Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. <sup>7</sup>She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.'"

It is evident from this story God wants His wife back. God wants His people to be faithful in true worship and He acts to make that happen. When God acts, He is acting in love to protect and preserve that love relationship.

God would be completely right, just as Hosea would be completely right to say to Gomer, "Okay, forget it! I am finished! You continue to go after other lover after other lover with no sign you are sensing any remorse, let alone a desire not to continue in that. Get out of my sight and never come back." God would be right to say that to us as we are unfaithful, but God does not do that. Instead, He pursues us even when we are unfaithful to Him. He tells us, "I am going to build a wall around you so that even if you want to pursue other gods, you will have difficulty finding them. You will not be able to enjoy these other gods anymore."

The principle we learn is: God, in love, works to show us how weak and powerless other gods are to bring us life. That is love when He does that. He acts to make us aware how foolish it is for us to pursue other gods. To Israel He sent a drought and He said to them, "Do you believe it is Baal who provides rain to you. I will cut off the rain and let

you call out to Baal and see how he answers. He is powerless. You will suffer the misery of a drought and all the while you will call out to Baal, your lover, and you will realize Baal has no power to rescue you.”

God often, in love, works to show us how weak and powerless other gods are,

<sup>8</sup> “And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.”

Imagine that offense. It is like being give a healthy body and using it to sin. False worship blinds us to God’s goodness. Satan, in the Garden, deceived Eve into thinking God did not want her to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because if she did she would become like Him and experience a wonderful life and God did not want her to experience His wonderful life.<sup>1</sup> False gods blind us to the True God’s goodness.

<sup>9</sup> “Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season...<sup>11</sup> And I will put an end to all her mirth...<sup>12</sup> And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages, which my lovers have given me...’<sup>13</sup> And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals...”

God is telling us if she does not turn, and turn quickly, He will meet out painful discipline. He will withhold His usual hand of provision. Every good gift we ever experience in this life comes from the Father and He is going to withhold His gifts because we continue to worship other gods and give them praise. We need to understand God’s purpose in withholding His goodness to us. It is to turn us from false worship and bring us back to true worship. The writer of Hebrews speaks to this in reference to God’s discipline of our hand,

<sup>5b</sup> “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives...”<sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

We need to see God’s discipline as a loving act of kindness, not to take life away from us but to bring us to life. This is the designed purpose and plan of God for His people Israel and it is a purpose God will be successful in fulfilling. The principle we must learn is: When we turn away from God things often get bad. God purposes to make Himself the center of our life and so He stripes us of these other gods and the pleasure of these other gods in order to place Himself at the center.

For instance, God may cause a man who worships money to lose his business. He may cause a woman who worships her health to lose her health. He may cause a young person who worships athletic success to lose their skill. He may cause a person who worships sex or alcohol to be devastated by its enslaving power. I do not know all God might do, but all of that is on the table, and more, in God’s discipline.

Do not mistake what I am saying. I am not saying obedient never endure severe and painful trials. They do. We can be obedient and still endure the loss of many pleasant things in this world. But, what I am saying is sometimes God brings trials on unfaithful people in order to bring us back to Himself. That is a clear message of Scripture. He often uses trials to help us to see these other gods we are worshipping, gods of money, pride, lust, desires, and self, will fail us. They are weak and impotent.

**The third necessity of true worship is a declaration of a return to true worship,**

<sup>7b</sup> “Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.’”

In other words, God is going to be successful.

<sup>14</sup> “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.”

When God does this He is always successful.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:1-6a

There was a time when I was dating my beloved Kimberly that, if you can believe it, she broke up with me. I did everything I could in my power to woo her and I came to the realization there was nothing I really could do to woo her back. I was going to be unsuccessful. Finally, when I gave it back to the Lord and stopped trying to woo her, the Lord brought her back to me. God is not powerless. What God purposes to do, that is what God accomplishes.

He woos Gomer and this is an amazing display of God's love. Hosea who is offended by his wife is the one who goes back to woo her as though she was a precious girlfriend to become his wife. That is God saying, "That is what I do. I am humbling myself." He is a humble God who woos an unfaithful people back. He would be right to cut us off, but He does not. What an amazing display of God's love.

Let me share a portion of a writing of James Boyce, one which I cannot improve upon. He imagines a dialogue God must have had with Hosea, "Hosea, do you know your wife is living in the poorest area of the city and she is living with a man who is not able to take care of her?" 'Yes.' 'Well, Hosea, I want you to go down to the marketplace and buy the food and the clothing she needs and see that she get it because I will not totally abandon my people when they run from me.'

"It may have been hard, but Hosea did what God commanded. As we read this story carefully, we are struck with a sharp sense of sadness of the moment. Hosea must have bought the food and gone to the area of the city where his wife was living and then looked up at not his wife but the womanizer she had shackled up with. Continuing with what the conversation may have been, 'Are you the man who is currently living Gomer the daughter of Diblaim?' The womanizer said, 'What business is it of yours?' 'I am Hosea her husband.'

"The womanizer must have been drawn back thinking Hosea was there for revenge. It would certainly be natural for him to think that, but Hosea said, 'I am not here to cause trouble. I understand you are not able to take care of her so I brought these things because I love her. Take them and see she does not lack in anything.'

"The womanizer would have thought, 'What a fool this man is,' but he took the groceries, the scoundrel he was and he went to Gomer and said, 'Look what I brought you,' taking the credit for it. She being the foolish woman she was believed him and threw her arms around his neck and thanked him with the thanks which should have been given to Hosea.

"Hosea may very well have been hanging around in the shadows to make sure Gomer had received what he provided because he comments on the nature of her folly. Does human love act like that? Does human love take valuable money and spend it on a difficult and immoral woman? Not very often, but this is the way God acts constantly."

We must ask our self this question: Have we ever turned from God to other lovers? The answer is, "Yes, of course, we have." Does God receive us back? The answer is, "Yes, every time." God's love for His own is not according to sound reason, but it is according to the deep commitment of love to us, His people.

So, we have this call: In view of God's surpassing love for us will we not love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength?<sup>2</sup> He is a God who is worthy.

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5