

The Tragedy of the Parsonage!

Hosea 6:6, “*I have desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*” – The Hebrew word translated as “*mercy*” in this verse, literally means, “*true love*” – having reference to a love that is *faithful* and *loyal*.

The story of Hosea is one of the most pathetic stories ever told. It could be entitled, “*The tragedy of the parsonage.*” It’s a story of a preacher's broken home, and his broken heart.

The Scene takes place in the City of Samaria where Jeroboam II is king. It’s an era of great prosperity and luxury. But, it is also a time of debauchery, and disgusting vices. Society was becoming more and more rotten. Ten years before Hosea, the prophet Amos, speaking in frank, and awful, plainness, speaks of the “*coming ruin*” of Samaria. But Samaria had not heeded and continued on its downward way as if greedy for its own destruction.

It was here that Hosea live and here he preached. Here he met and fell in love with a girl. How he met her and how fell in love, we are not told. But it is evident that to this love he brought the unsquandered treasures of a strong man's heart. Hosea had never sacrificed on the wayside alter of lust, so he had much to give.

The girl’s name was Gomer. She responded to his love for awhile. She glowed under the spell of its warmth and consented to become his wife. Thus, this gifted, brilliant young preacher was married. He felt he had every promise of the highest happiness possible.

Gomer might have been the happiest woman in Samaria. To her much was given and from her much was expected. However, Gomer turned from her possible paradise to plunge into the pigsty. She did not sympathize with Hosea in his work.

Hosea was doing all he could to save his people from national disaster. He could hear the rumblings of a nation falling to pieces. He must call Israel back to God, if she was ever to be saved. Hosea gave himself to this ministry.

Gomer did not care for such things and had no sympathy with, what seemed to her to be wild, unpractical dream of her “*too spiritual*” husband. She fretted and felt cheated. She said, “*You give too much time to preaching.*” She began telling herself, and letting others tell her, that she was leading a starved life. She was young and pretty, and made for more enjoyment out of life. She had a right to a life that was fuller of romance.

What about Hosea? Did he lay awake at night? Did he go about his duties with furrowed brow and heavy heart? He wouldn't say it, or even acknowledge it to himself, but he felt keenly disappointed. He saw a chasm widening between him and the woman he loved. Being the man that he was, he could not see this happen without pain.

Then it was that an event took place in his home that brought joy, at least for Hosea. A sweet, little baby boy was born. Hosea held this little boy in his arms and dreamed that a better day had dawned for him and his wayward wife. This little fellow would put his baby hands on both their hearts and draw them closer than they had ever been before. But, again Hosea was destined to be disappointed. Gomer did not become more devoted, but less so. Day after day, the

exciting life about her seemed to absorb her. Hosea, the baby, home, these were just barriers between her and her right to enjoyment.

Hosea, in spite of his love and pure mind, began to grow suspicious. With the passing of years, two more children were born, a girl and then another boy. He named the girl, *Loruhamah*, which means “*unloved*.” The boy, he named *Loammi*, which means, “*No kin of mine*,” for, by this time, his suspicions had proved to be true. Gomer was unfaithful to him and the children born in his home were not his own.

Then were days of estrangement, followed by periods of reconciliation. Gomer would weep and ask for forgiveness, afterward, return to her old life. Then came the time when Hosea returned to find the children alone. She was gone! - This was the worst possible blow. Is there a greater wound that can come to man? Did she leave a note? “*Don't try to find me, I'll never come back! I have gone with one who promises me happiness!*”

Being the Godly man that Hosea was, he must have led his children in Godliness. Did they pray at night? Did they say, “*God bless mommy, bring her back?*” Did Hosea sleep that night or did he pace the floor? Did he look into the face of his sleeping children? Did the girl look like her mother? Did she have tangled, curly hair? Is that a strong man we hear crying? “*Oh, Gomer, how can I give you up?*”

The night passed, but the day was equally as bitter. Days and night crept by, but there were no stars in the night and no sun in his days.

Hosea questions God about this bitter, terrible tragedy. Then his eyes began to see and his heart began to understand. He saw the infinite love of God better than any man of his day. He probably realized *the love of God* deeper than any other man in the Old Testament. It was through this awful tragedy that Hosea learned something of the nature and meaning of sin.

As Hosea thought over the unfaithfulness of Gomer and her desertion and how broken-hearted he was, he came to realize that, as Gomer had sinned against him, so man had sinned against God. He saw that the sin of Gomer was *unfaithfulness* and the sin of man is also *unfaithfulness*

Gomer's sin was not the mere fact that she had left him and give herself to someone else. Hosea learned that sin was more than an *outward* act. It was an *inward* something – something of the heart. Gomer did not begin to be unfaithful when she left home. Her leaving was only the end, the outward act, an expression of her infidelity that had begun months, or even years before.

HOW HAD THIS TERRIBLE TRAGEDY BEGUN?

It begun in Gomer's heart, when she ceased to appreciate Hosea's purposes, plans and ideals. Gomer had come to think, little by little, that life with Hosea would be lean and starved. She mistrusted Hosea's ability to bring real happiness. She began to seek happiness somewhere else. She said, “*I'm young, I only have one life. I have a right to enjoyment.*”

When we say we have a right to live our own life, what we really mean is, “*We have a right to do as we please.*” And, that is selfishness.

Gomer's sin, then, was not the fact that she left Hosea. She could have sinned against him no less and remained in his home. Many live in the same house and face each other every day and yet are wide apart. The bonds of love and confidence do not exist.

WHAT IS SIN AGAINST GOD?

Is sin against God to lie, steal or cheat? No! These are only the *outward* workings of sin, symptoms of *inner* malignancy. To sin against God is to refuse to trust Him. It is to refuse to give Him allegiance, loyalty and faithful love. It is to turn from finding happiness and joy in Him and to seek it elsewhere.

Sin may express itself in different ways:

1. A man may reject God to waste his substance in riotous living
2. Another rejects God and yet remains altogether decent, moral, respectful

Why did the Prodigal go into a far country? It was because he wanted too. He sought to please himself, rather than his father. Why did the Elder Brother remain home? It was for the same reason, because he wanted! Sin is not an outward act, but rather it is an inner disloyalty of the heart.

As sin is *a thing of the heart*, so is Christianity. What did Hosea want of Gomer? Was it her service about the house that Hosea missed? Did he grieve because he had no one to sweep the floor, dust the house or cook the meals? If that were so, he could have hired a housekeeper.

The answer is, no, a thousand times no. Hosea wanted a wife, a companion, one he could enter into a loving relationship with, one he could fellowship with.

That's what God desires of us. He said, "***Faithful love have I desired, not sacrifices!***" God desires loyal, true love. He is not asking for your service, primarily – or your money. He is asking for **YOU**. He says, "*My son give me thine heart!*"

If God gets our heart, He has everything else. If He does not have *that*, He has nothing.

There are others lessons in the book of Hosea, As Hosea saw Gomer become more distant, it broke his heart to see her love the filthy and unclean things of the world. He could not take it lightly and wept many tears. Why? He wept for the simple reason that he loved her. In spite of her sin, he still loved her. He did not want to see her suffer It broke his heart to see her cling to the thing that he knew would ruin her.

Just so, God grieves over us. Sin always pains God. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of her rejection. *This* is what brought tears to His face. God is pained when we reject His way.

Hosea learned also something of the amazing *mercy* of God. What amazes me about this story is that Hosea's love did not turn to disgust and rejection that he did not come to despise her. Hosea still loved his unfaithful wife.

She despise him, wronged him. She made him an object of scorn and pity. She dragged

his good name in the gutter. She seemed to have utterly forgotten him. But, though he was forgotten, he never forgot!

How many times did he hear of her escapades, some recent chapter out of her sordid life? As he hears of her doing last night, some wild orgy, you would think that he would forget all about her. But, he could not forget her. How many times did he make up his mind to do just that, forget her, to blot her out from his memory and tear her picture from his heart? But he couldn't do it. The foul breath of passion had blown her out of his arms and out of his home, but he still loves her.

As Hosea ponders the situation, he learns that God is an infinite in His love. Hosea thinks, "***If I am unable to forget Gomer, though she has forgotten me, God will not forget man. God's love will not let man go!***"

The song: "*Oh, love that will not let me go,*" explains it all. Hosea came to realize more than any man in the Old Testament that "*God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son*"

Then, one day Hosea hears a terrible piece of news, the man who had lured her away, who had promised to make her so happy, had deserted her. And, even worse, Hosea learns that she is to be sold. Her ***Prince Charming*** had sold her. Her ***Knight in shining armor*** was a white slaver after all. He had come with such promises of large freedom but, in reality, he brought, binding fetters and clanging chains. Hosea learned through all of this that sin makes wonderful promises, but, never keeps them.

Listen, there maybe some things that worldlings can do that is not a child of God is not privileged to do, but those who seek the freedom which sin offers, will find slavery, *nothing more*.

If all who have found this to be true would say "*amen*" at the same time, it would sound like a clap of thunder and shake the whole world.

Samson felt he could break away from the restraint and "***taste***" life, but he found blindness, fetters of brass and grinding at the mill.

Ask Gomer. She had to have the bright lights and the flattery of admirers, but now the lights have gone out and she wears shackles. She is a slave in the filthiest of all filthy markets, the slave market.

What a deceiver sin is!

A National Geographic magazine tells of a spider that is flower-like in appearance. However, whenever a bee, or insect, comes, seeking honey, it finds itself gripped by the tentacles of death. Sin, often seems fascinating in appearance but its touch is slavery; its grip is destruction.

As Hosea hears of Gomer being sold, he slips away to find her. Did the children ask him where he was going? Did they say, "*Bring mother home?*"

Hosea goes down to the haunts of shame and picks up this bit of human wreckage,

Gomer,” seething in the sea of sin that has spit her upon its shores. He buys her from the owner for 15 pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley. He brings her home again.

We are not told what happened after that. The curtain drops. It is possible that the love, and devotion, of this good man softened her. Maybe she repented and wept her way back to God. Maybe she heard God's prophet who said, “*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as wool.*”

However, she may have resisted. Though love is “*the mightiest thing*” in the world, it is possible to resist and reject it.

There is a far more wonderful story. We have resisted and insulted the love of God. We have turned from Him in cool contempt. When we have all but made shipwreck of our lives, God calls. He loves us and has not cast us off. Jesus came to a slave market to buy us back; the price was His life! He came to give His life a ransom for YOU”

Will you respond to that love?

Cast yourself in His arms. He will make your life whiter than snow. If you refuse, you sin against this great love.