

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

ISHI NOT BAALI

And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

Hosea 2:16

The custom of arranged marriage is a most common practice in many cultures around the world. In fact the concept of the choosing of a spouse being left completely up to the parties being married is in some measure a modern practice. In our culture (or lack thereof as the case may be) most look aghast at the thought that someone other than themselves should choose the husband or wife that they are to be wed to. Yet one has to wonder if our practice is the best one when we look at the high rate of divorce in our culture compared to that of those cultures who arrange marriages for their children.

The worship of free-will (which is rampant in our society) leads its adherents to equate true love with the exercise of that will, yet true love is that which most often comes long after the period of courtship and the ensuing wedding is over. Mutual love between spouses is usually the result of commitment and devotion on the part of one towards the other rather than a google eyed devotion being the cause of that commitment. In the eastern cultures the man was generally much older than the bride which he took to be his wife. In many cases she had no prior knowledge or contact with him before her marriage to him. A good example of that can be found in the account of Rebekah and Isaac. (see Gen.24)

Here in the book of Hosea is seen an example of true love shown to an unworthy wretch. The LORD commanded Hosea to marry a harlot named Gomer. (see Hos.1:2) There is no evidence that Gomer was ever faithful unto Hosea or that the children that she bore to him were all indeed the fruit of his loins but rather likely the product of her whoredom. She even attributed the sustenance which was provided by the faithful Hosea, as that which her many so called "lovers" gave her. (see Hos. 2:5) Yet her wickedness and unthankfulness never in the least deterred Hosea in his desire to fulfill the purpose of GOD in manifesting love to her.

The marriage of the LORD JESUS CHRIST to HIS elect bride is an arranged marriage. The bride was never consulted in this arrangement, but rather HE loved her before the foundation of the world. She has always been the apple of HIS eye and the delightful object of HIS deepest love and devotion. HE has determined to spare no expense in making her HIS wife, not only in redeeming her from the bondage and slavery into which she willingly sold herself but also in winning her heart and causing her to love HIM in return. It was for this reason that HE created the world to manifest HIS glory in her redemption.

The promise of GOD to HIS true people was that HE would write HIS laws upon their hearts and give them a knowledge of HIMSELF and HIS everlasting love for them. To this end HE has given HIMSELF as a sacrifice and payment for all of HIS bride's debts, and taking away her tattered and stained garments has clothed her in the finest attire, that being the robes of

HIS perfect righteousness. HE has given her everything she could possibly need and has ordered her every step that she might be brought to a wealthy place. (see Ps. 66:12)

But alas she has played the harlot even as Gomer, yet HIS love for her has in no wise been diminished, yea her wickedness is but the backdrop upon which HIS devotion is displayed. *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom 5:8) In spite of HIS selflessness exhibited for her she has continued on her sinful way, loving darkness rather than light, and counting the benefits of the goodness of GOD as being supplied by her own efforts or the provision of her many lovers. *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."* (Eph 2:2-3)

Yet, HIS love for her is so great that HE would not leave her in her dismal condition but in a time known to HIM and fulfilling HIS purpose HE is pleased to call her out of darkness and into the light. *"And you hath he quickened, (i.e.; made alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph 2:1) Having made her alive HE is pleased to send the gospel to her, causing her to hear it and believe. (see Rom. 10:13-17)

The worshippers of free will tell us that GOD waits for men to choose HIM. Yet the LORD said, *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."* (John 15:16) There is none that seeketh after GOD except that HE does first cause them to do so and likewise no fruit is born by any except that the LORD should produce it in them by the power and operation of the HOLY GHOST.

The LORD does indeed bring HIS people by a way that they knew not. Nor could any have ever designed the circuitous route by which the LORD is pleased to bring HIS people, in order that HE might bestow upon them the riches of HIS favor and the manifestation of HIS grace. HE causes the sin and lewdness of HIS people to be manifest in their eyes and strips them of all reliance in their former lovers. *"Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now."* (Hos 2:6-7) The LORD will not abandon HIS bride but will cause her to see her folly in contrast to the display of HIS kindness to her.

HE will overcome her proud and stubborn heart which would seek out many lovers and will constrain her unto HIM in such a manner that she shall no longer call the one she loves *"Baali"*, (that is an imperious and hard taskmaster, even as Baal who demands service but gives not provision, see I Kgs.18:25-29), but rather *"ISHI"* (that is my loving and devoted HUSBAND, who is strong and worthy).

The sons of GOD are constrained unto HIM by love alone. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom 8:1-2) That which is "duty" to the fleshly religionist and free will worshipper is but the greatest delight unto the true sons of GOD. Their labor in CHRIST is their joy and their devotion is that which is wrought in them by HIM who is faithful in all things. *"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* Gal 2:19-20) *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phil 2:13)

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