

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

CORN AND WINE

For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

Hosea 2:8

While marriage was given to a man and a woman for their mutual benefit, the primary purpose of the institution of marriage was to illustrate the relationship which the LORD JESUS CHRIST has to HIS church and vice versa. Though the marriages of men and women are quite imperfect as we can readily observe, the marriage of CHRIST to HIS church has no such imperfections.

The hardness of man's heart, is demonstrated in many ways as men continually seek to pervert the way of GOD. It is according to that hardness, that we see an institution which was limited, according to GOD's purpose for it, to men and women; now diverted from its proper use to include unions between men and men and women with women. This is a stark reminder of the wickedness which dwells in men by nature and is a manifestation of the judgment of GOD upon mankind. *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;" (Rom 1:26-28)*

The greatest of the imperfections of human marriage, however, is seen in the increasingly acceptable (to mankind) and even seeming inevitability of divorce as a means of overturning a proper marriage. Divorce was not meant to be a convenient and satisfactory option for those who enter into a state of marriage and then grow weary of one another. Rather it was because of the hardness of men's hearts that the LORD permitted divorce in the first place.. *"He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." (Mat 19:8)*

Men and women alike will make all sorts of excuses in order to justify divorcing their spouses. Practically any excuse will do when a person is bent upon that outcome and hardly any counsel otherwise will prevent it. There is no doubt that some of those excuses have a ring of validity to them. Yet, the children of GOD are called upon to shun the example of the world and to follow the steps of CHRIST in all things.

If there has ever been a person who had a valid reason to divorce his spouse, it would be the LORD JESUS CHRIST. HIS bride has disrespected HIM, disregarded HIS teaching, committed adultery with many lovers, and been generally unthankful, yet HE has remained faithful to her and has never cast her off, even laying down HIS own life for her while she was determined to be HIS enemy and even despised HIS many overtures of kindness.

The LORD raised up the prophet Hosea to illustrate HIS own love and utter devotion to HIS elect bride in all circumstances. HE sent Hosea (whose name in the Hebrew means Deliverer and is also synonymous with Joshua whose name in the Greek is JESUS which literally means

JEHOVAH is SALVATION) down to the house of Diblaim and commanded him to take unto himself a wife who was a harlot and the daughter of a harlot. Hosea knew exactly what she was when he married her and she bore him children which may or may not have been his own since she ceased not from her whoredom even though he was faithful unto her.

Even while she engaged in her harlotry and doted upon her many paramours, Hosea never ceased to secretly provide for her benefit, supplying her with corn and wine, oil, and money. He did this even though he knew she attributed this supply to those who lay with her as she said, *“I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.”* (Hos 2:5) Not only did she credit these illicit lovers with supplying her needs, but she also used these gifts from Hosea, a prophet of the TRUE GOD, for the worship of pagan deities.

Yet in all of this Hosea never ceased to cherish his bride, nor in any wise to diminish his faithfulness and provision for her. Even in such time as he was directed to remove his provision from her, so that her nakedness might be uncovered and her whoredoms be revealed, it was done by him because the LORD would manifest that HIS love for HIS bride is especially revealed as HE is pleased to convince her of her barrenness apart from HIM. *“Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.”* (Hos 2:9-13)

For the LORD would have HIS bride to find all of her delight in HIM, yet she cannot; until she is made fully aware of her innate corruption and wickedness. Thus, even as HE uncovers her nakedness, HIS tender mercies are extended to her, and HE means it for her good. *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Rom 8:28)

The tender mercies of the LORD are revealed unto those whom HE has loved with an everlasting love as HE brings them to the very end of themselves, causing them to recognize their depravity and revealing to them in no uncertain terms, their own bondage and slavery to sin.

For the bride of Hosea was brought to poverty, not so that she might be punished, but rather to cause her to see herself as she was, even now on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidder. *“Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley.”* (Hos 3:1-2)

Thus the LORD would demonstrate that HE has bought HIS bride with a price, above what any of her lovers who had cast her off would be willing to pay. She had no value in their sight yet she was richly beloved by HIM whose love could not be measured and who saw her not as a worthless harlot but as a beautiful bride clothed in HIS own rich garments, sparkling in her beauty before HIM as a bride adorned for her husband.

Oh the riches of the glory of HIS grace which has been put on display for HIS beloved spouse. She is nothing but a despicable whore in the eyes of the world as she stands upon the auction block at the slave market. Yet HE sees her as that one whom HE has loved from before the foundation of the world, that one for whom HE has provided all things needful, paying the price of her redemption with HIS own blood. And now HE has given her that Kingdom which is eternal in the heavens. *“Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”*(Hos 3:5) These are indeed those *“latter days”* of *“corn and wine”*. (see Hos. 14:7) mam