

Would You Have Fellowship With Hosea?

By Frank Jamerson

If Hosea and Gomer were members of the congregation where you worship, could Hosea preach? Could Gomer teach a Bible class? The message of the book of Hosea is one that needs to be taught and practiced today. Hosea did not just teach his message of mercy, he lived it. He could preach with a broken heart about the broken-hearted God, because of his own experiences, but many today would not listen to him because he was divorced from his wife! Many brethren would not listen because "all the guilt is not on one side" or "no one is completely innocent in a divorce." But, was Hosea a better preacher because of his experiences or a worse one? What about his wife? Would you allow a reformed prostitute to teach your children? Granted that she would have to show "fruit" of repentance, but granting that she has done that, would you forgive her?

Let's look at the story in Hosea again. God told Hosea to "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed a great harlotry by departing from the Lord" (Hos. 1:2). Hosea's relationship to his wife and children were used to help him understand the relationships between God and his people. The meaning of the children's names indicated the spiritual condition of Israel. The first boy was named "Jezreel" (God will scatter), the little girl was named "Lo-Ruhamah" (not loved, or no mercy) and imagine the bitterness of his soul as Hosea named his next boy "Lo-Ammi" ("not my people," or "illegitimate")! After doubting the parentage of his own children, Hosea's wife left him to live with her "lovers." Even after those heart-breaking experiences, God told Hosea, "Go again, love a women like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans" (Hos. 3:1). He bought her back for the price of wounded slave, and after a period of "proving" he accepted her back as his wife. Remember, she represents God's people and Hosea represents the forgiving God. Hosea saw God's willingness to forgive and his own willingness to forgive the wife helped him to understand God's!

Many today catalog and categorize sins. They are willing to "forgive" some sins, but not others. Maybe we will forgive "white lies," but harlotry? Paul said about the Corinthians, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you (is that "all" of you, or just "some" of you?) were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1Cor. 6:9-11). How many of those who were "washed, sanctified and justified" in Corinth would you use as preachers, elders, or Bible class teachers? How many of them would you "forgive"?

Brethren, "the way of the transgressor is hard" enough without us making it harder by unforgiveness! Paul told the Corinthians to "forgive and comfort" the fornicator who had repented "lest such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow" (2Cor. 2:7). If two years later, the Corinthians would not call upon him for prayer, allow him to teach a class or preach a sermon, have they forgiven him? When we continue to treat the person as a sinner while protesting that we have forgiven, we need to remember the words of the Lord: "For if ye forgive not men their trespasses" (Matt. 6:15; 18:35).

Finally, to those who have experienced the unforgiveness of brethren, do not be angry with God, for He is not its source. Be angry with Satan and refuse to serve him!

Nanny Goats

"Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, Be strong, do not fear!" (Isa. 35:3-4).

Mountain goats live in a dangerous environment. One wrong move and they can fall to their deaths. Young mountain goats can be in special danger because of their playfulness. Douglas Chadwick in National Geographic writes that the kids of mountain goats are "born to romp, leap, twist, skip, and prance...High spirits and wandering attention can be fatal for young goats. Fortunately, nannies dote on their off-spring, tending them from the downhill side to black falls..."

This is an excellent illustration of how mature Christians should care for babes in Christ. New Christians will stumble and fall on occasions and, thus, older Christians should tend them from the downhill side, ready to block them when they fall.

Stop Copping Out

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

A child received a set of roller skates as a much anticipated birthday gift. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm was greater than his balance, and he kept falling down. His mother suggested he exchange the skates for something less likely to hurt him. He replied, "I got these skates to learn to skate with, not to quit with." We need to stop quitting and copping out.

Musings on a Cemetery

By B. Killebrew

As I drive down the street to work every day,
I pass by a cemetery along my way.
It's one of the old ones with stones of each class
From sandstone to marble, some with nameplates of brass.
What a multitude of people now gone from this earth
Have their bones gathered there, no longer of worth
Did those people of old leave a mark as they went
From birth until when their remains there were sent?
Were they kind or jolly; did they give alms to the poor?
When they left us did someone swing wide heaven's door?
How many stories must be there, buried in time;
Some must be evil, others sublime.
But we know that the end of each story's the same
Nothing remains but a stone with a name.

A Moments Wisdom

--Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

--You don't have to advertise a fire.

--What if we received tomorrow only those things we thanked God for today?

--I worship the God who made the stars, not the stars themselves.

--I was born in July which makes my zodiac sign Cancer. Do you know what that means?
Absolutely nothing.

--Peter wasn't Paul; Paul wasn't Apollos; Apollos wasn't John Mark; and, none of them were Barnabas. Preaching is the Gospel expressed through a personality.