

The Minor Profits

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Date: 20 December 2018

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[0 : 00] Well, I have a special treat for you today in that I am not going to be speaking. We are going to call upon a couple of scholars who are dealing with this passage in Hosea chapter 3.

And as I poured over their words, I thought there is no way that I can express this content better or as well as they have. So I'm just going to share it with you and I'm going to beg your indulgence because sometimes it can be boring if somebody is just reading to you.

But trust me, fellas, there is nothing boring about this content because it represents the most incredible love story in all of Scripture. And insofar as the direct interpretation of it is concerned, there is no question that the text is speaking about God's relationship to the nation of Israel.

But he is using a very human drama to illustrate it. And it is a most unusual kind of drama in that he is asking this prophet of his by the name of Hosea to marry a woman whom he knows is an adulterous woman and love her and make her his own.

That is a pretty tall order. At the same time, we note the importance of obedience because Hosea, despite all of the human obstacles that would be there of emotion and all the rest, Hosea did something that was very, very unusual.

[1 : 34] And that is, he obeyed the Lord rather than follow his own inclinations, which would have been and have nothing to do with that kind of a situation. But he responded favorably.

And the record demonstrates that it is a powerful, powerful love story that initially God is using Hosea as a human, personable kind of illustration to demonstrate his love for the wayward nation of Israel.

And by way of that, and that's, that's the interpretation. And by way of application, it can also speak to the love affair that Christ has with the church.

And it is illustrated in the poem that we'll be sharing later, if we have time to get to it, about the hound of heaven. So without any further ado, I want to begin by reading this very short chapter from Hosea chapter three.

And as loaded as it is, and then we will go into a couple of commentaries, one by Dr. Peter Craigie, the other by James Montgomery Boyce.

[2 : 45] And Dr. Craigie was dean of the Faculty of Humanities, professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary in Canada.

And he is the contributor, he's the author of this Twelve Prophets, Volume One. And it is extraordinary content, as is that from the Minor Prophets by Dr. James Montgomery Boyce, who is now with the Lord.

And you may recall that Dr. Boyce was pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for a number of years, and he succeeded Donald Gray Barnhouse. So reading from Hosea chapter three, if you will follow along, we will read the chapter, and then we will go to some of the comments that these gentlemen have to offer.

Chapter three. Hosea, then the Lord said to me, go again. I want you to note that word, again. Love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress.

Now this simply means that Hosea is in love with an adulteress woman. This is an extraordinary kind of love.

[3 : 55] This is a love that would tax all human resources. But it is a love that nonetheless Hosea had for this woman named Gomer. Go again. Love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress.

Even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes. Now what in the world is that all about?

We won't take time to go there now. Maybe we'll get to it in our next session. But for those who are taking notes, there's an alternate reference in Jeremiah 7 and verse 18. Chapter 44 and verse 19.

And it has to do with the things that they made in connection with offering to this false idol. And this involved the idolatry with which the nation of Israel was taken.

And God is judging them for it and using that as an illustration. And in verse 2 he says, So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.

[5 : 09] Then I said to her, You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man. So I will also be toward you.

For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols.

Now you may wonder, what in the world is that all about? And that is expressed in the little word for. It means because, or in light of that fact. And what this is illustrating is this time of separation between Hosea and Gomer is depicted in a human way, and it is actually revealing the time of separation between the God of Israel and Israel, which they are undergoing at this present time.

Israel is set aside. Judaism is a defunct religion, and it has been ever since the veil in the temple was torn in two at the crucifixion of Christ.

So they are now scattered all throughout the earth, and God is one day going to bring them back again. But what is taking place between the God of Israel now and Israel is a time of separation.

[6 : 30] And this is what Paul is referring to in Romans 11, when he says that Israel is set aside due to judicial blindness until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in.

Well, this is now the time and the day of the Gentiles, that is the non-Jews. But this is coming to a conclusion. And when it does, Gentiles in the body of Christ are going to be removed from the earth, and God is going to take the nation of Israel from the wings where he has separated them, put them back in the center stage, and they will once again be responsive to God as they were originally.

But that time is not coming. So what we're talking about here is a great divorce that has happened between the God of Israel and the nation of Israel. And this is what he means when he says, for the sons of Israel, that is the descendants of Israel, will remain for many days without king or prince.

And they don't have a king. They don't have a prince. The last king was Zedekiah when he was led into Babylonian captivity, 586 B.C. And Israel's been scattered all throughout the world.

And when they were reunited, miraculously in 1948, they still didn't have a monarchy. And they don't to this day. They have a Knesset, like our Congress, and they have a prime minister, but they don't have a king.

[8 : 03] Zedekiah was the last king to sit on the throne. The next one who will sit on the throne of Israel will be Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, when he comes back.

So the sons of Israel will remain for many days, and that's his present time, without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols.

Afterward, afterward, the sons of Israel will return. They're not there now, but they will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king.

David will be resurrected, and so will you when this time comes, and David the king will sit on the throne under the direction of David's greater son, Yeshua HaMashiach, who will be ruling and reigning with a rod of iron throughout the earth.

So, David their king, and they will come trembling to the Lord and to his goodness. When? In the last days.

[9 : 12] And we've already related to you how Israel is going to be holed up in Petra, and Christ is going to return there, and it's going to be a glorious thing. So, what we are dealing with, in essence now, has to do with this great relationship between Hosea and Gomer, which God is using as a human illustration to depict his relationship with Israel the nation.

You'll recall that earlier, it was the picture that God established whereby he was the husband, and Israel the nation was the wife. And he had pledged to them his faithfulness, his provision, his care, his protection, with the stipulation that they would respond to him as a faithful people, and not go a-whoring after other gods, idolatry.

Well, that is precisely what happened. And because of that, the northern ten tribes were judged, carried into Assyrian captivity. The southern two tribes are going to be judged, carried into Babylonian captivity, where they will be for 70 years, and then come back underneath Nehemiah and Ezra in the building of the wall, and that's all future.

So, I want to jump in now and deal with this love situation between Hosea and Gomer, and what we are giving you is from the pen of Dr. Peter Craigie.

So, listen carefully, guys, because this is great content. I found it very, very moving. As before, the call is curious by comparison with the norms of prophetic vocation.

[10 : 47] Hosea is told, go again, love a woman, and the name Gomer is not used, though it is implied both by the preceding story and by the interpretation that follows in verses 4 and 5.

So, the prophet is told to love again, though one suspects he had never ceased to love his former wife, who is described here as an adulteress, loved by other men.

One of the subtle differences from the first vocation is to be seen in the divine command initially. He was told to take a woman. Chapter 1, verse 2.

Take, being a technical expression to marry. But now, he must go a step further and love a woman, the same woman.

And the force of the command is enhanced by the description of the one to be loved. To paraphrase, God says in effect, love one who is unlovely, unlovely, unlovely, and who loves others.

[11 : 58] What a tall order. As before, Hosea obeys. All I can say is, what a guy.

What a guy. You know, some would look at him and probably did in his day and say, how can you be so stupid? How can you be so stupid as to lavish your love and attention on a woman to treat you like that?

What's the matter with you, man? Are you crazy or what? But he had a higher commission. Amazing. As before, Hosea obeys.

Recalling the hardship that had ensued the first time he had obeyed such a command, he must have acted with some trepidation. But he obeyed anyway. You swallow hard and you say, okay, Lord, I hope you know what you're doing because I sure don't.

The response to the divine command posed some difficulties for the prophet. His ex-wife was no longer available and had to be purchased.

- [13 : 14] The implication of verse two is either that Gomer had become somebody's slave or concubine and thus must have her freedom purchased. Alternately, and more probably, she had become a slave or possession of the temple of Baal where false religion prospered.

There, she would have been engaged in the sexual practices of the fertility worship of Baal. From such enslavement, Hosea purchased her.

The price paid being approximately the amount required to redeem a person from slavery. Having purchased her freedom, Hosea would live in seclusion with Gomer for many days, seeking in the shared loneliness to restore the intimacy of love that once had existed.

This would be honeymoon number two. It must have been very tense. In the interpretation, verses four and five, the life of Hosea is shown once again to portray and foreshadow God's dealings with Israel.

Beyond the disruption of covenant relationship would lie a long period of separation between Israel and God. By the way, that's what's taking place right now. But beyond that, a renewed relationship would be formed between the Lord and his people.

- [14 : 42] This conclusion to the story of Hosea's marital and family experiences is remarkable for the insights it offers concerning the biblical message as a whole.

First, it demonstrates the supremacy of love over law. When Hosea is commanded to love and marry Gomer again, he is faced with a terrible impasse.

The divine call impels him to action, but the divine law already established appears to prohibit the action to which he is called.

According to the ancient law, a man who has divorced a woman may not remarry the same woman after she has been married to and divorced from another man.

It's made quite clear in Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4. How can God ask Hosea to do what is prohibited in divine law?

- [15 : 50] Now, recall, if you will, recently, we shared with you a statement that is very powerful and one you need to think through, and that is God does not do what is right.

Remember that? But what God does is right. In other words, God is his own standard for what is right.

What God does is right because it is God who does it. Now, we hold to a different standard because there is a standard above our human standard, but that is God's.

So it is simply saying that God is his own standard. How can God ask Hosea to do what is prohibited in divine law? The question is faced wrongly.

Love always precedes law. If law took preeminence, there would be no gospel in either the Old or the New Testament.

- [16 : 52] think about that, guys. If law took preeminence, there would be no gospel in either Old or New Testament.

And as Hosea is asked to go beyond law in the pursuit of love, so too does he demonstrate God's purpose of love that transcends law.

Here, in a nutshell, is the gospel of love in the Old Testament. If law were the sole criterion, God could not have sent his son to redeem the world any more than Hosea could have gone out to redeem Gomer.

But divine love is a force that knows no bounds. Law may follow love to give structure to the forms of love, but law can never have preeminence.

Wow. Think of what Paul said when he closed out that 13th of Corinthians. Now abides these three, faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love.

[18 : 03] Time is coming when faith and hope will both be put out of business, because what they were hoping for and what they had faith in will have already been realized, accomplished, achieved, and there will be no need for it.

But love is the coin of the realm. God so loved. And remember the meaning of that little two letter word so, God so loved, doesn't mean quantity, doesn't mean God loved this much, so that his love grew and increased and finally it got to the place where he was willing to give his son.

No, no, no, God's love is not a matter of quantity, it's a matter of quality. And that word so means in the Greek is the word hutos, and it means God in this manner, in this way, it was this kind of love that caused God to give his only begotten son.

It's a quality of love possessed by the deity. And as we've expressed this agape love in the past, it refers to when you say and do those things that are in the best interest of the object of your love, that's what love is.

It is an act of the will, it is not determined by emotions or feelings, but by the will, and that's what makes it so outstanding. things. These verses also demonstrate the unflagging pursuit of God's love, when by every standard he should have ceased to love Israel.

[19 : 51] Still, God loves relentlessly, pursuing through the years those in whom the flames of love have long since died.

Francis Thompson, the English poet, from 1859 to 1907, captured splendidly this knowledge of the pursuit of God's love.

As a young man, following certain disappointments in life, he had become addicted to drugs. Sounds like the 21st century, doesn't it? But this was 1859 to 1907, still addicted to drugs, and his addiction had reduced him to the life of a tramp on the streets of London while still in his twenties.

At the age of 31, in 1890, while struggling to break the chains of his addiction, he wrote the poem, The Hound of Heaven.

Like Hosea, he perceived the pursuit of a divine love that will not cease from its course. I fled him down the nights and down the days.

[21 : 07] I fled him down the arches of the years. I fled him down the labranthine ways, out of my own mind, and in the midst of tears, I hid from him, and under running laughter, up-visited hopes I sped, and shock precipitated, adound titanic glooms of chasm-fears, from those strong feet that followed, followed after, but with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace.

Delivered speed, majestic instancy they beat, and a voice beat, more instant than the feet. All things betray thee, who betrays me.

Wow, the Hound of Heaven. And then we turn to the pen of Dr. James Montgomery Boyce. And he relates this incident regarding purchasing a slave out of the slave market.

There are different ways that one could become a slave, and one could become a slave by conquest. One could become a slave by birth.

That is, if your parents were slaves, you became a slave automatically. Thus all who descended from the Athenians who were captured at Syracuse became slaves. Finally, you could become a slave through debt.

[22 : 33] Gomer presumably became a slave in this fashion. This is Hosea's wife. Thus the time came when at the peak of her misery, she was sold on an auction block in the capital city, and Hosea was told by God to go buy her.

there is his wife, his former wife, on the slave option block.

Can you imagine that kind of scene? How gut wrenching? We know quite a bit about the selling of slaves in antiquity because much has been written about it.

For example, the slaves were always sold naked. Naked in public.

Well, how else would a prospective buyer know what he was getting? Naked. there is a Greek play in which a fat man is put up for sale.

[23 : 42] Now, this is kind of a side comedy thing. But you can imagine in a comedy play and a Greek play, the people in the audience depicting this scene in the slavery, which was right out of their own experience.

Fat man. The bids were starting. Fat man is put up for sale. The bids are starting and the men who were buying bid 10 cents, 15 cents, 20 cents.

And they begin to joke with one another. One man says, why do you bid 20 cents for that fat slave? As soon as he gets in your house, he's going to eat up all your food. And the man who bid 20 cents justifies his bid saying, oh, you don't understand.

I've got a squeaky meal. I'm going to cut him up and use him for grease in my meal. And of course everybody would get a big laugh out of that at the expense of these who were there on the auction block.

At last, a beautiful woman is put up for sale. Her clothes are taken off. And now the bidding is not 10 cents, 20 cents.

[24 : 52] It is \$100, \$120. The men are bidding for the body of the female slave. Thus was Gomer put up the sale.

Her clothes were removed and the men of the city were there to see her nakedness and bid for her. And God told Hosea to buy his wife back.

Can you imagine that scene? Can you imagine what a laughing stock Hosea must have looked like? One man started the bidding. Twelve pieces of silver.

Hosea said thirteen. Fourteen pieces of silver. Hosea said fifteen. The low bidders were beginning to drop out.

But one man continued bidding fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel of barley. Hosea said fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel and a half of barley.

[26 : 09] The auctioneer looked around and seeing no more bids sold to Hosea for fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel and a half of barley.

So look at your text if you would please. Verse two So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.

so what a scene what a picture and it is all designed to set forth the kind of love that God had for Israel and the kind of love that he has for those whom he is calling to himself.

Dr. Boyce goes on to say does God love like that? Yes God loves like that.

God steps into the marketplace of sin and buys us out of sin's bondage by the death of Christ. We read in our Bibles for God so loved the world in this manner that he gave his one and only son.

[27 : 38] We ask well we've already told you what so means. When we see Hosea standing in the marketplace under orders from God to purchase his wife who had become an adulteress and a slave we recognize that this is the measure of God's love.

Not only for Israel but for you too. We are Gomer. We are the slaves sold on the auction block of sin.

The world bids for us. The world bids fame wealth prestige influence power all these things that are the world's currency.

But when all seemed lost God sent the Lord Jesus Christ his son into the marketplace to buy us at the cost of his life.

If you can understand it as an illustration God was the auctioneer. he said what am I bid for these poor hopeless enslaved sinners?

[28 : 42] And Jesus said I bid the price of my blood. And the father said sold to the Lord Jesus Christ for the price of his blood.

There was no greater bid than that. So we became his and he took us and clothed us not with the dirty robes of our old unrighteousness which are as filthy rags but with the robes of his righteousness and he said he says it to you today if you are a believer you are to live with me many days you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man and I will live with you and the authorized version says so will I also be for thee that is how God loves us and that is what Jesus did on your behalf wow what a God what love absolutely amazing no wonder John Newton penned what he did about amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me amazing have you comments or questions anyone she was his wife originally and actually what we're talking about is probably a space here of three children behind them and twelve to fifteen years later yeah yeah and you know you get the impression that

I don't know love that is real and deep between two humans can withstand all kinds of conflict and heartache it is just there there we we are not we are not capable of adequately expressing the power of love I guess the greatest that we can come to it is that John three sixteen illustration that that and again in Romans five when when Paul said God demonstrated God put on display God illustrated his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us the point has been made that

Christ did not die for any good people there weren't any he died for sinners and the text goes on there in Romans five to say for scarcely for a good man some might be willing to die and for a righteous man some might be willing to die but God commends his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us that means we were at enmity we were at enmity with God that means a state of war existed between us and our fallenness and self centeredness and God and God took the initiative and overcame that and as a result we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and the war is over the best way I know to illustrate this fellas is that we all know we all know of instances where where soldiers have gone into combat and have literally laid down their lives for the life of a buddy the guy next to them where he fell on the hand grenade to save his comrades or he put himself in harm's way to rescue someone he gave his life for a comrade but I don't ever recall in all of the annals of history particularly world war ii whether it was with the japanese or the germans i don't ever recall an american soldier giving his life for a japanese soldier or german or german soldier the object of that was to kill them not lay down your life for them but to kill them and this agape love this incredible love that god has for us is the love of god shed abroad in our hearts and it is a supernatural love there is nothing natural about god's love it is a supernatural love and that's the love and the ability that he gives us to love one another and greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends well maybe there is a greater love that a man lays down his life for his enemies wow that's what we're dealing with here there is no one of us here myself included who has any idea at all how greatly and how deeply and how thoroughly you are loved by god if we knew and could better understand that i think we would just melt into a molten mass of gratitude but maybe one day we'll better understand it than we do now in our finiteness it's very difficult for us to grasp this kind of love and the scriptures express it all throughout and hosea hosea is a case study of god's incredible love for this nation and they have turned their back on him they have gone astray they have gone after other gods after other deities incredible and remember from the text we saw earlier in our minor prophet study where the lord addressed israel through amos in chapter 3 i think it was verse 2 where he reminded israel he said you only you only of all the nations of the earth have i known therefore i will judge you for your iniquities israel could not plead ignorance they had more information and more examples and more love and care and more provision and more miracles

provided on their behalf that no other nation even knew anything about and yet they still turned away from him incredible absolutely this just depicts the ingratitude of the fallen human heart and we are all partakers of that kind of fallenness the hymn writer put it this way prone to wander lord i feel it prone to leave the god i love here's my heart oh take and seal it seal it for thy courts above wow i do not i do not ever come to the word of god feeling any sense of what shall i say competence or ability or anything of the kind and i don't think that anyone who has any understanding of the word of god ever could and anybody who thinks they do is not fit to proclaim it i can promise you that there is no way that we can do justice to this to this book or to its contents and we just stumble and falter around it and we just kind of bite around the edges but we are unable to even think about plumbing the depths of this incredible love story that begins with genesis 1-1 and doesn't end until revelation 22 the whole account is just well one day we'll understand it better than we do now but have you comments or questions mike your statement just now about talking around the edges and not really understanding is that basically the explanation of why replacement theology is not understanding i think that's at least part of it yeah i think that's part of it the replacement theology idea well you know we've shared with you before and i don't want to rehash this but it is a very important ingredient that we are all born in a state of fallenness i think everyone understands that as in adam you know we are all fallen and and part of that fallenness is our intellectual capacity we have a fallenness in that too and it enables us to think in a way that is skewed from divine logic and we this this is this is a principal reason god has given us his word because in his word god gives us his perspective and his viewpoint regarding everything and it is designed to counteract ours which is flawed and failing and often inaccurate and this is what enables us to think and do really stupid things the great einstein was asked one day how he would characterize the difference between intelligence and ignorance and

[38 : 55] Einstein said well intelligence has its limits and just kind of left it there so ignorance seemingly doesn't have its limits and this is the thing you know proverbs proverbs says there is a way 1625 proverbs there is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is the way of death it just seems so logical and no one no example i think is greater than that of what i call operating on the barrett system this is the way man is cued this is the way we are struck we automatically operate on the basis of desserts and people try to apply that to a connection and a relationship with God and that is we are saved we are evaluated on the basis of our good deeds etc and that if you do enough good deeds

God will accept you and your reward will be heaven hey fellas that is completely logical because that's the way life works but that's not the way a connection with God works because it is on the basis of grace and grace is completely contrary to human thinking and that's the reason that we arrive at these skewed logical conclusions about salvation by works and by good deeds and so on because that's the way our fallenness reasons and the scriptures are given to inform us that God doesn't operate as men operates that God operates on the basis of grace and it is by grace you are saved through faith that not of yourself it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast that is completely contrary to the way people think and yet that is the gospel that is the essence of the gospel and fellas that's also why it's called good news good news because salvation is not based upon the quantity of our deeds it's based upon the quality of the deed of Christ when he died on that cross and just exactly what was it he paid for and was it sufficient yes it was so thanks to these two authors they've given us some valuable enlightenment regarding who's like is there you of these people here have you here