

Devotion 31:

## **Our Father Gives Grace**

Hosea 1—14

Hosea is the third prophet who receives a command from God concerning marriage. Jeremiah had been told not to marry due to the impending disaster that was about to fall on Judah and Jerusalem. Ezekiel was told not to mourn publicly for his deceased wife as Israel was not to mourn for the fall of the temple and Jerusalem. And now Hosea is given this marital command:

*“The Lord said to him, ‘Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.’”* 1:2

Marriage is the most intimate of relationships on earth known to man. Suffering adultery is one of life’s biggest crosses to bear. In fact, in our American society today, it is grounds for divorce. In Jesus’ day, it was grounds for divorce. (Mt. 19:9) But our Father doesn’t react to His bride as man does.

*Webster’s Dictionary* defines *grace* like this: “unmerited divine assistance; favor; mercy; pardon; disposition to kindness or clemency; undeserved favor.” It is interesting to note that mercy and forgiveness proceed from grace. The book of Hosea, like every book in the Bible, shows us God’s grace toward us.

The vast majority of the book describes Israel’s unfaithfulness. Her waywardness led her to seek help from foreign kings, countries, and gods. Her actions were frequently depicted as that of a prostitute. And when Hosea the man encounters adultery in his wife, our Father says this to him:

*“Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”* 3:1

This earthly parable by Hosea’s life was to mirror to the Israelites what the Lord was going to do for them.

*“Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: ‘Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. Assyria cannot save us’....I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”* 14:1-3a, 4

This is truly amazing grace. This is steadfast, unconditional love.

Unfortunately, many are tempted today by the enemy to believe that we must do something before God will take us back. Many think that they must first clean up their act before coming to God. Not only is this impossible, but it would also nullify God's grace. Grace rules out all human merit. Grace cannot exist as grace if man cooperates or does anything to save himself. Thus God's grace provides not only salvation but also safety and preservation for the saved one, despite his or her imperfections. Paul wrote about grace in Romans 5:8:

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Grace perfects forever the saved one in the sight of our Father because of being in Christ; grace bestows Christ's merit and Christ's standing forever on the believer. There is now no obligation to gain what we already have—favor with our Father! The Old Testament law system as a merit system is no longer applicable because we are now under grace. (Rom. 6:14)

Some may wonder, “Then why do we try to keep God's laws today?” It is our being moved by grace not to gain His favor but to respond in gratitude and love toward our Father and to show our Father's grace and love to others.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for Gomer, Hosea's wayward wife, to be taken back and loved by Hosea? Can you imagine what it must have been like for the Israelites to have heard Hosea 14:1-4 above? I believe you and I can imagine it. For our daily, even hourly, experience living in this sinful flesh is to sin in thought, word, or deed. Our eyes look lustfully at lesser gods and our minds lean on our own understanding. Our daily existence is a constant reminder that we need—indeed our only hope lies in—our Father's grace.

We have favor with our Father because He is grace and He dispenses grace to the undeserving.