

# Grace speaks tenderly



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**Key verses:** Hosea 2:14-23

## Introduction

In the previous verses of Hosea we saw how Israel pursued other lovers, looking for wealth, comfort, and security in other Gods and other nations, but with every step away, the Lord pursued after them. At this point, God could have divorced Israel, they had broken their covenant, they defiled their special relationship and part of the covenant was that if Israel was unfaithful God would abandon them and break the covenant.

However, the great twist in these beautiful verses is that God doesn't act in rage and resentment. Of course, He is hurt and deeply offended by Israel's sin but instead of giving in to wrath and revenge God in his perfect goodness and purity, moves toward Israel with a renewed passion and love. He applies his mercy to Israel even when they were unfaithful and sinned against the Lord.

### What is mercy?

Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward undeserving creatures, and mercy is His decision not to pour out wrath on all people but to provide for the forgiveness of some. God's mercy is not a matter of forgetting or ignoring our sin; rather, His mercy is seen in His choice not to hold our sins against us if we repent and believe.

*\*Ligonier, The Lord's Great Mercy\**

## The main idea

In Christ, God responds to our unfaithfulness with mercy and abundant kindness.

## God's abundant love and mercy

The reigning metaphor of Hosea's marriage to an adulterous wife is meant to portray God's faithfulness to us, even when we've been unfaithful. We are meant to see ourselves as that unfaithful wife, each one of us is Gomer and God is that faithful husband, wooing us back to Him this very day.

As we turn into this remarkable passage we will see a beautiful picture of God's loving grace and mercy in 5 promises of salvation marked by the phrase "I will. . .":

- **vs 14-15:** Allure + Woo you back to me
- **vs 16-17:** Change your status and remove your guilt
- **vs 18:** Make a new covenant
- **vs 19-20:** Bind myself to you eternally in righteousness, justice, kindness, and steadfast love.
- **vs. 21-23:** Answer and bless you when you cry out to me.

## He will allure and woo you back to him (vs 14-15)

As we already noted, God doesn't come near to us in wrath and anger, but rather in mercy and grace. These words that He tenderly speaks to Israel are words of forgiveness, these are gospel words, good news words of God's saving grace.

There are three key points in these verses:

1. This idea of wooing and alluring us back to him shows us that God doesn't force us to love him. We are not pre-programmed robots, rather He has given us the capacity to respond to his voice. But on the flip side. In our sin and rebellion, we would never choose to come to Him on our own.

So, much like a lover persuades the object of His love with romantic gestures, God speaks tenderly to us, and we become, so to speak, intoxicated by His great love for us.

It is fitting that vss 14-15 are most likely a poem or song, and just like a song awakens our emotions and affections, this is how the gospel awakens our hearts to Him, it is like a familiar tune calling us to join in song and dance. And if we are truly the Lord's chosen ones, his very own beloved ones from before the creation of the world, as Paul says, then our hearts will resonate with this good news message. This gospel song calls his own to Him. God is a wooing God who calls us to him and



His sheep know his voice and follow him. (Ref. John 10:27-28)

2. Note how in vs. 15 God says, "I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope". This is an important point about how the bible speaks about our salvation. Verse 15 speaks of a complete change of trajectory, an "umkehrung" as the Germans say.

The Valley of Achor was a horrible place where Achen's sin brought disaster upon Israel as a result this valley was named "trouble" (Achor means "trouble"). So, God will turn our "valley of trouble into a doorway of hope". What a beautiful sentence!!!

And that's what God does! He turns our troubles into joy. . . he takes our mourning and gives us joy in our hearts. . . he takes our wailing and turns them into songs of deliverance. . . he takes our heartaches and turns them into victorious, abundant blessings. . . He turns our trouble into hope!

Jesus went to the cross so that our valleys of trouble might be transformed into doorways of Hope!

We who were lost and separated from God by our sin have been restored and renewed because he took our place in the valley of trouble. He who knew no sin, became sin, so we might have the righteousness of God.

*\*Carsten Lotz\**

3. In verse 15 we also see Israel respond with a first love response. They go back to their first love; the honeymoon period of their relationship with God! "she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt."

### Questions of application:

*The idea of God alluring us to Him through the Gospel is an intriguing idea.*

1. *How might that change the way we understand the gospel message?*
2. *How might that help us when we fall into sin?*
3. *How might this change our idea of sharing the gospel with others?*

*God turns our valleys of "trouble" into doorways of hope.*

4. *How has God done that in your own life?*

### He will change your status and restore you

**(vs 16-17)** There is an interesting play of words here in Hebrew. The Lord says: you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' "Ba'al" in Hebrew is not just the name of the Caninite religion of Baal, but Ba'al means "Master". . . like a slave-master relationship. So, not only will God remove the Baal religion, but also change His way of relating to His people. This new covenant will be a new way of relating to humanity, instead of seeing God as a master, an angry man in the clouds, we can relate to God as a wife relates to a good and loyal and faithful husband with such intimacy and unity.

He is not keeping a list of your sins. He has thrown it away. It is gone. "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" Psalm 103:11-12

So, what grace we get in Jesus; not only does He restore our relationship to Him, but He forgives us and gives us forever clean slate.

### Questions of application:

1. *God chose the most intimate relationship (marriage) to describe His love for us. How does that help you understand our walk and relationship to Him?*
2. *Do you have an example of God's restoration in your life?*
3. *he removed our transgressions from us, how this idea encourage you to not sin against God?*

### He will make a covenant promise to us (vs 18)

God will make a new covenant, and this new covenant will not only be with his people but



with the whole creation. The great thing about this covenant is that God will do it no matter what we do. The new covenant has no stipulations, we are not called to do something to gain God's favor or salvation, it's all God's grace and mercy. (Ref. Jer. 31:31-34).

“When God makes a covenant, He binds Himself to His people to fulfill His promises. The new covenant is the fulfillment of all God's promises through Jesus Christ. The old covenant made with Israel under Moses always pointed to the more glorious reality of the new covenant. This new covenant is in Jesus' blood (see Luke 22:20), and it will never come to an end. His sacrificial death initiated the new covenant and, as a result, made the old covenant obsolete. In the new covenant, God forgives the sins of His people forever by the blood of His Son and writes His law on their hearts by His Spirit. One day, Jesus is coming back to consummate or complete the reality of the new covenant by giving us a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5). In the new covenant, God's people are obedient to Him from the heart and all ultimately know Him as Lord. Jeremiah 31:31-34 predicts the new covenant, and Hebrews 8 describes its fulfillment in Jesus.”  
- The Reformation Bible Study.

#### Questions of application:

1. *How is the New Covenant different than the Old Covenant (Mosaic)?*
2. *In what way you can see God's mercy in the New Covenant?*
3. *Have you ever tried to gain God's favor? What was the outcome?*

#### **He will bind his self to you eternally in righteousness, justice, kindness and steadfast love (vs 19-20)**

This is the new covenant promise: that God will bind himself to us forever, it will be for all eternity. And again to emphasize the same idea of marriage as the perfect example of the relationship of God with his people we find the word “betroth” “which represents the final step in courtship and involves paying a bride price to the bride's father. The qualities of righteousness, justice, love, mercy and faithfulness are sort of bride-price that guarantees the permanence of the relationship.” -The Reformation Bible Study.

In Christ we have all these things:

- His righteousness becomes our righteousness (Amos 5:7).
- His justice falls on himself and we are given mercy (Amos 5:15,24; Mic. 6:8).
- His steadfast, enduring, faithful love is showered upon us.
- His mercy forgives our sins (Gen. 43:14; Deu. 13:17; 2 Sam. 24:14).
- And we are given a supernatural faith, not from us, but from Him, so no one can boast. He puts this love in our hearts for Him, the same love the Father and the Son and Spirit have shared for eternity we are invited in and enter into this beautiful loving relationship (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:2; Gal. 2:15-16).

#### Questions of application:

1. *God's New Covenant will be bounded by mutual righteousness, justice, kindness, steadfast love and faithfulness. How does that happen in the heart of the believer?*
2. *What reaction comes to you when you understand that God already paid the price to make us his bride?*
3. *What should be your response to the truth that “He will betroth you to him forever”?*

#### **He will answer and bless you when you cry out to Him (21-23)**

Through these verses we learn that we can have the security that God will answer to his people when they pray, and what will he answer them? “I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”

In Hosea 1:3-9 we see how Gomer and Hosea had three children, whose names described Gomer's unfaithfulness: Jezreel (Scattered), No Mercy and Not my People, but its only by grace alone that now,

- Jezreel (Scattered) is redeemed and will be sowed in the land.
- “No Mercy” will receive mercy
- And, “Not My People” becomes His people

And they shall say “You are my God”.

What this means is that we are no longer identified by our sin and past, but we are given a new destiny and new identity in Christ.



Here God describes a new kind of harmony that will be restored. What the Hebrews call “Shalom”, which is not just the absence of strife, but also the added benefit of harmony and the right ordering of things.

### Questions of application:

1. *What is your response to the truth that we are no longer identified by our sin and past but by the new identity we have in Christ?*
2. *In which practical ways can you live/show your new identity in Christ?*
3. *As believers, how can we already experience hints of Shalom in our own lives today?*

### A Gospel Invitation to the lost

These 5 promises are not just a theoretical list of nice thoughts and good wishes, but rather this is actually what happens in the life of the believer today.

Through the good news message Jesus came preaching, what is called the “Gospel”, God is wooing you back to Him, He is telling you that you can once again have a clear consciousness and walk with God in love, peace and joy.

This is a time of returning to God. This life we live today is short and limited and these are the days God has promised if you come to him in repentance and faith, then He will come to you in grace, mercy and blessing.

We have all sinned, we have all been self-centered, we have all ignored our maker. Now is the time of grace and mercy but there will be a day where God’s mercy will come to an end, there is a day when it will be too late to get your house in order, a time where we can no longer be right with God. So repent now, this can be your day of salvation.

We are told in Acts 17: *“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness”- Acts 17:30-31*

There is a day where we will stand before our maker and if we have rejected his Son, he will reject us. If we have denied Him, He will deny us, and there will be no hope, no mercy and no grace. There is a day of judgment that awaits,

Jesus taught us this: We will stand before the throne of a holy God and we will give an account of all that we have done or failed to do.

When the day of judgment comes, there are going to be two types of people: those who are covered by the blood of Jesus and those who must stand on their own righteousness and their own good works, the question will not be are you more good than bad? No, the question will be are you perfect like God is perfect? Did you repent? Are you Holy as God is Holy?

Here is our dilemma “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” but here is how Jesus has solved our problem: He took your place, He let the judgment fall on Him instead of you, and He gives you His perfect righteousness, so you can stand confident on the day of Judgment. Not because of your good works but rather on account of His completed work.

Today can be a day of your salvation, come to Jesus and let Him take your burden, let him wash your soul clean. Turn to Him. Confess your sins and let Him come and change your heart of stone into a heart that beats for Him and for others.

### Other resources

#### Hosea:

<https://rb.gy/hpzq7>

<https://rb.gy/vscwg>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/scripture/hosea>

#### Mercy:

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-lords-great-mercy>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/lord-grace-mercy-and-justice>



