

# Podcast: God's Boundless Love for His Wayward People (Hosea 1)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome to the Grace Parade podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Wes Feltner. This is a place of proclamation and conversation about the gospel of grace. It was Monday morning, the day Jill always did laundry. She chose Monday because she wanted her family to have clean clothes for the upcoming week. But this normal, ordinary Monday was about to take a life-altering turn. Jill took the basket of laundry into the bedroom, started folding the clothes, and as she did, a card fell out from her husband's pants pocket. When she picked up the card, Jill froze. It was an ad for a Las Vegas prostitute. Her husband had, after all, just returned from a business trip to Las Vegas, and she knew people handed those cards out there all the time. But what made this card more troubling was a personal name and number that was written on it. It was probably a prank from one of her husband's co-workers. I mean, after all, her husband wouldn't do anything like that. Later in the evening, when her husband returned from work, Jill decided not to mention it. She didn't want to cause a scene in front of the kids. At bedtime, as her husband was brushing his teeth, she walked into the bathroom and placed the card down by the sink. She waited for a reply. What? He said. What do you mean, what?

What? What is this? I don't want to talk about it. You don't want to talk about it. We have to talk about it. Why? Because this is a card for a prostitute. Did you sleep with her? Well, you know I wouldn't do something like that. Give me a straight answer. Did you? Yes.

It was Friday afternoon. Nick couldn't wait to get home. He was never what you would call a romantic type, but today was his anniversary. He asked what most men do. He asked Google for some advice, planned the whole evening out. He would surprise his wife with a gift card from Nordstrom, flowers from Bachman's. They were going to check into a nice hotel where he had a spa package arranged for her, dinner at an elegant restaurant, tickets to the state theater. The night would end back at the hotel with relaxing and a red bottle of wine. It was going to be the best anniversary they'd ever had, but when Nick got home, he noticed a car in the driveway that he'd never seen before. When he walked into the garage, he heard strange noises upstairs. When he opened the bedroom door, his wife and another man frantically tried to grab their clothes to minimize the situation.

Now, for those of you listening, I want to ask you, how would you respond if you were Nick or Jill? How would you respond in a situation like that? Some of you would be angry. Some of you sad, maybe confused or violent, shouting or silence. Maybe all of the above. But why don't you think about what your response would truly be? And consider the following response. After Jill's husband admits to being with a Las Vegas prostitute, Jill's response was this. I want you to take off work tomorrow. Cancel all your appointments because we're going to spend all day together where I will romance you like you cannot imagine.

Would that have been your response? Or take Nick's response. He finds his wife with another man and telling the man to leave before he knocks his block off. Nick says to his wife, honey, get cleaned up, put on your favorite dress and get ready to experience the best anniversary you've ever had.

[ 4 : 41 ] Would that have been your response? What do you think of those responses? Insane. Unjust. Not right. No chance. No way. Not in a million years. Would anybody ever for a second ever come close to responding that way? And yet, did you know that that's exactly how God responds to you in the person of Jesus Christ? You know, the Bible says that you and I, if you'll pardon my language, have prostituted ourselves with worldly things. James 4, 4, for example. And yet God, according to his boundless love in Jesus Christ, wines and dines us anyway. It is the insane,

outrageous, and scandalous grace of God. And there's an Old Testament book that's all about this scandalous grace, this insane love that God has towards wayward people. It's the book of Hosea. And it's all about the outrageous, insane, unthinkable love of God towards people who have outrageously and insanely given their love to everything other than God. It's interesting. The book opens up with the picture of a wayward people. Hosea here, a prophet of God, is told to marry a prostitute. In verse 2, he is told to go and take yourself a wife of Hortum and have children of Hortum, for the land commits great Hortum by forsaking the Lord. And so he went and took Gomer, and they conceived and bore a son. Now, what is this image?

Well, in Hosea's time, he was speaking around the 8th century, around 750 or so BC, based upon the kings that were mentioned in verse 1. Now, what we know about this is this was the time of great prosperity for the nation of Israel. It was like a second golden age, if you will, the first, of course, being David. While Assyria was on the rise, Israel and Judah had not yet felt the pressure of that, and they were partying like it's 1999. The economy was booming like a rocket. Their borders were expanding.

It was a time of peace. And as is often the case, with prosperity came idolatry. You know, it's easy to fall in love with money when you have lots of it. More specifically, you have a worship of the false god Baal or Baal. There was temple prostitution. The nation was full of abusive power. They were taking advantage of the poor. There was drunkenness and theft and murder. You can read all about that in Hosea chapter 7.

So Israel is experiencing idolatry. And that idolatry, which is spiritual adultery, is pictured here in this relationship between Hosea and Gomer. For instance, in chapter 3, in verse 1, it says to Hosea, Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods. Hosea has a wife named Gomer who is not only unfaithful, she becomes a prostitute. While this is a real story, it illustrates Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

You see, for instance, in Ezekiel 6, verse 9, the same language is mentioned. Those who escaped will remember me among the nations where they carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after idols. The Bible uses the same language in James chapter 4, verse 4.

[9:07] You adulterous people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? So you see this imagery of idolatry or spiritual adultery used frequently in Scripture. Now, why is that such a big deal? Why is it such a problem? Well, it's not because of the sin in and of itself that's such a big deal. It's that God is a big deal. You see, God is the best, most satisfying, treat you how you should be treated, handsome husband that you could ever ask for. God is everything your heart longs for. That's why when your heart longs for something or someone else more than him? Why it's a serious sin. You may remember C.S. Lewis famously said that we settle for mud pies because we can't imagine a holiday at the sea. Well, in Hosea's language, it would be we settle for immature boys because we can't imagine what it would be like to be married to a real man.

That was the waywardness of Israel, and that is our waywardness as well. We are spiritual adulterers. Our hearts, as Calvin said, are an idol factory, and we run to other gods. And as a result of this, for the nation of Israel, they were warned of judgment. In chapter one, what follows after Hosea is taking of Gomer is that there will be three children. The first is Jezreel. Now, at first, that doesn't mean much to us, but Jezreel, back in the Old Testament times, was a valley where battles take place. It was a place known for its bloodshed. It would be like naming your kid Armageddon. It's a picture of judgment and bloodshed that's coming, and it did in 722 B.C.

The imagery of judgment keeps going. The second child in verse 6, a daughter, is to be called no mercy. The third child in verses 8 and 9 is to be called not my people. In other words, these three children represent the judgment that would come upon Israel because of their waywardness, and that judgment would be bloody. That judgment would show no mercy. That judgment would be like a son treated like he's not my people. Now, if you're thinking clearly, your response is probably, well, that's right. That's what you do with whores. That's what you ought to do with prostitutes. That's what you do with people that are unfaithful. You kick them out. You say they're disqualified. You put them alone on the outside of town. You have nothing to do with them again. The end. Game over.

That's how it should be. But is that the final word in how God responds to his wayward wife? Is that the final word in how God responds to your waywardness? You see, there's a little word in verse 10

of chapter one that is profound. It's the word yet. In fact, the verse begins, yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea. Aren't you thankful for the word yet, but, or nevertheless?

[ 12 : 44 ] It's one of the greatest words in the Bible. I am eternally grateful for the word yet. Let me give you two other biblical examples of the good news of the word yet. Jonah, for instance, was facing judgment as he was under the water, as he was in the belly of the great fish. And this is what he says in Jonah two in verse five, the waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me. The weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought me up. You brought up my life from the pit. Oh Lord, my God, praise God for the word yet. Or in Ephesians two, it says among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And we're by nature, children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. And then verse four starts with, but, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us. Praise God for yet, but nevertheless, you see,

Israel was a wayward wife and judgment was coming. Yet God would remain faithful to her. She would be blessed as verse 10 and 11 says her number would cover the sea. That is God will be faithful to the promise that he made Abraham. And even though she will be broken, she will be restored. Not my people will become children of the living God. You see, when it comes to God's love, there's no such thing as a point of no return. The fire of God's love cannot be put out by the waterfall of your sin. As we, many of us sing in the great chorus, our sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Does this feel scandalous to you?

It should. Because until the love of God is a scandal to you, you do not truly understand the love of God. In fact, if you don't realize how outrageous the love of God is, it will never be outrageous to you.

Why in the world would God love whores? Why choose a prostitute when he could have a princess? Hosea gives us the answer. In Hosea chapter 11 and verse 8, it says, how can I give you up, O Ephraim?

That is the northern kingdom Israel. How can I hand you over, O Israel? My heart recoils within me. My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim why for I am God and not a man the Holy One in your midst and I will not come in wrath do you know why God loves this way do you know why his love is outrageous do you know why his love is boundless even among the wayward people who commit whoredom and spiritual adultery it's because it's just who God is God's love is grounded in God it's not grounded in you it's not that he just has pity on you it's not that you did something good to deserve it it's that it's the kind of God he is he can't help but be merciful to the people that he loves and it's a good thing that God's love is grounded in his nature and not our works now if you really understand what the truth behind this in Hosea really is you ought to be shocked how can God love a people like us how could God love a wayward wife like Israel how can God love a wayward wife like you the first response if we're really understanding the outrageous love of God is to be shocked by it but then we ought to be thrilled by it thrilled because it's true it's real you see the love of God may be hard to believe but my dear friend it is not make believe this is our story this is our song and then thirdly we ought to be changed by it if we really see our sin for what it is and understand just how outrageous and unconditional the love of God is it changes us one of the things that it changes is how we love other people we often tend to look down our nose at others and fail to show them love fail to give them grace how can we do that when we have been given such amazing love because you realize that those who we often reject are the ones that God runs after most of us want nothing to do with a gomer but Hosea a picture of God's love will not stop until he has her that's the introduction to the story of

[ 18 : 23 ] Hosea a wayward people the warning of coming judgment but behind it all a wooing God and that story in the Old Testament is preparing you for another one for a Friday afternoon she wasn't what you would call a romantic type but it was their anniversary or as they called it back then Passover and know how he wanted to celebrate this anniversary with his bride to celebrate the day that he purchased them from the pimp called Pharaoh to celebrate the day when they entered into a marriage covenant at Sinai but when he arrived on earth to pick her up she was found with many lovers and there was only one proper response to deal with a whore like that judgment except this judgment was more scandalous than the sin itself because in this case the one judged was not the wayward wife but the faithful husband and the judgment just as Hosea one prophesied would be

bloody it would show no mercy and it would treat a son like he was not my people and yet Jesus the faithful husband so loved his bride he took her judgment with joy and three days later prepared a table for her where he would wine and dine her for the rest of her eternal life that is the boundless love that God has for you in the person of Jesus Christ that is the grace parade thank you for listening to the grace parade podcast join us again next time for proclamation and conversation about the gospel of grace thank you for listening to us thank you for listening to us and we're going to be doing great

Thank you.

Thank you.

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