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THE OPEN DOOR

Once when Queen Victoria was living at Balmoral Castle in Scotland and the young princes were at home, the sentries who were standing to guard the palace saw a little boy, very poor, and with almost ragged clothes on, continually coming up to look in at the gates. They told him again and again that he could not be admitted there, and that he must go away back to his home in the village.

The little boy's answer always was "I want to go in and see the Queen." At last one of the Princes came by that way, and enquired who the child was, and why he was there. The sentry replied that "they could not get him to leave the gates, he had been there a long time, and said he wanted to see the Queen." The young Prince went up to the little boy, and talked to him very kindly. "Do you want to see the Queen?" he asked. "Yes," said the little child. "I came a long way along the road all by myself, because I want to see the Queen. Mother told me how good she was, and that she is always kind to little boys. But the soldiers have told me to go away."

The Prince took the little boy's hand in his, and saying to the sentries, "It is all right, I will take him in." He walked down the carriage drive, up to the steps of the castle, where he led the little boy in through the open door (for it was open to the Prince, though it was shut to the boy until the Prince took him by the hand) into the presence of the Queen.

He told her the child's simple story, and the Queen received him with the greatest kindness. She asked him where he came from, found out all about his home, and why he had wanted to see her. She then gave him cakes and presents of different kinds, amongst others a possession he had never had in his life before, a book of coloured pictures.

When the little boy was quite satisfied, and his face beaming with smiles, the Prince led him safely back again past the sentry, towards his own home.

The Door of Heaven stands open to us today; and even though we may have a long life here, the heavenly kingdom should be our home; no earthly hindrance or human barrier, or fear or doubt in our hearts need keep us back from our loving Father in Heaven - the great King of kings.

If we trust the Lord Jesus, and reach out the hand of faith to Him, He will take care of us, and bring us safely in. He is the Prince of Life, and the Prince of Peace, and He has all power in heaven and in earth. If we make Him our Friend today, we shall never regret our wise choice, for He is able to bring us to God. He Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). And the apostle Paul wrote, "Through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Ephesians 2:18)

Here is the truth of it, written in such plain words that none can fail to understand: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5)

SALISBURY CONFERENCE 2016

This year's Salisbury Conference will be held, God willing, the weekend of 30th September – 2nd October. The preacher invited is Rev. Andrew Swanson, presently serving the Lord in Cyprus.

The general theme for the conference is: "Commitment", something which, we believe, is often and sadly conspicuous by its absence in the contemporary church.

On the Friday (30th September) at 7.30pm, Mr. Swanson will speak on "**Commitment to the Lord**", emphasizing the need of dedication and consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ, the giving up of the key of our hearts

to Him.

Saturday (1st October) at 10.30am Mr Swanson's address will deal with the subject of "**Commitment to the Local Church**". This will highlight the Christian's duty to join a sound, gospel church, and to maintain a steady and faithful attachment to it, regularly attending its services, wholeheartedly engaging in its public worship, and consistently serving, in and with the church, at every possible opportunity.

At 1pm Mr Swanson will direct attention to "**Commitment to the Gospel of Grace**". As one who has himself spent many years in evangelism on the mission-field, Mr. Swanson will demonstrate from Scripture that we should all be involved in soul-winning, supporting every effort to spread the good news of Christ and His free and full salvation.

At 2:30pm our own Minister, Malcolm Watts, will address the conference on the subject of "**Commitment to Holiness of Heart and Life**". Mr Watts will seek to encourage believers to renounce sinful and worldly behaviour and to live in a way worthy of the God we own and profess.

Services on the Sabbath (2nd October) will be at the usual times of 11am, and 6.30pm, our own Minister preaching in the morning and Mr. Swanson preaching in the evening. Mr. Swanson will also speak at the After Church Meeting which will begin at approximately 8.30pm.

If you are able, please join us for the conference. It promises to be instructive but also deeply challenging. We shall look forward to seeing you.

AUDIO MINISTRY

Two major changes were made to the audio ministry at the start of this year.

The first is that sermons are no longer being recorded on cassette tapes. These have been replaced by memory sticks. Each memory stick has mp3 recordings of two sermons and the following Bible study. Six high quality mp3 players have been purchased for church members to use.

The second change is that a video of the whole of each Lord's Day service is recorded. This can be seen on our YouTube channel. The simplest way to see and hear this is to visit our web site "www.salisburyemmanuel.org.uk" then click on the YouTube icon near the bottom of the page. We are grateful to the recording team for the extra work they are doing to provide this facility.

Richard Ward

YOUNG ADULTS DAY CONFERENCE AT CHIPPENHAM

The Christian conference in Chippenham is for young adults with an age range guide of Year 10 to 30's. There is a Spring and an Autumn conference each year, and the venue is The Cause in Chippenham.

The conference has been well established now for over 5 years, and is organized jointly by Dewi Higham of Tabernacle Cardiff and Paul Thick of Emmanuel Church, Salisbury, with a Conference Council represented by Malcolm Watts (pastor of Emmanuel Church Salisbury) Neil Pfeiffer (pastor of Swansea Evangelical and Reformed Church), Pooyan Mehrshahi (pastor of Providence Chapel Cheltenham) and David Kay (pastor of Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church Barnstaple).

The aim of these conferences is for young Christians to learn from God's Word as to how they can live as true testimonies to God's glory in this world, and they give opportunity to enjoy a day of fellowship with like-minded believers and to establish new friendships.

Last year's Autumn Conference was held on Saturday 21st November with approximately 50-60 young people attending. Tea and coffee was served on arrival (with homemade cakes) and the first 2 addresses were at 10.30 and 12.00, with a short break in between. The speaker was Maurice McCaughey and he spoke from Titus 2.12 on how we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

They were excellent addresses on practical Christian living and were a real encouragement on how we should desire to live our lives in a godly way.

The conference addresses can be heard by going the Tabernacle Cardiff website and clicking on the Chippenham Conference tab.

Lunch was at 13.00 with opportunity to go into town and get fish and chips etc. and then return to the venue to eat together and enjoy fellowship before the last talk of the day at 15.30.

It was a day of great biblical teaching and good Christian company so do be encouraged to come along to the next conference if at all possible, as it is sure to be a real blessing to you.

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SEVEN PROOFS OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY

First, He is called **“God.”**

Compare Ps. 45:6, 7, with Heb. 1:8, 9; Is. 9: 1-6, with Matt. 4:12-16; Is. 40:3; 54:5; Zech. 14:5; Matt. 1:22, 23; Jn. 1:1; 10:33; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:3; 2:13; 1 Jn. 5:20.

Second, He is called **“the Son of God”** in the sense that implies sameness of nature with the Father.

Compare Ps. 2:7, with Acts 13:33; Matt. 3:17; 16:16; 17:5; 27:54; Mk. 3:11; 5:7; 14:61, 62; Lk. 1:35; 10:22; Jn. 1:18, 34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 6:69; 9:35, 36; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31; Acts 8:37; Rom. 1:4; 8:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:19; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:13; Heb. 4:14; 2 Pet. 1:17; 1 Jn 1:3, 7; 2:22-24; 4:9, 10, 14, 15; 5: 5, 10, 13; Rev. 2:18.

Third, He is called **“Lord”** in a way that proves His infinite superiority to all creatures.

Matt. 12:8; 16:41-46; 20:30; 22:43-45; Mk. 5:19, 20; 9:24; 16:19, 20; Lk. 3:4; 9:59-62; 10:17; 13:25; 23:42; John 1:23; 11:21, 22; 13:13; Acts 1:24; 2:36; 5:14; 7:59; 9:16, 10:36; Rom. 1:3; 4:24; 6:23; 14:8; 1 Cor. 1:3; 8:6; 12:3; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 3:11; Phil. 2:11; Col. 2:6; 3:24; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1: 8,9; 1 Tim. 1: 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phil. 3:8; Heb. 2:3; James 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:11; 2 John 3; Jude 14; Rev. 14:16. The title of the “Lord” is applied to Him more than five hundred times in the New Testament.

Fourth, He is declared to be **equal with God,**

John 3:35; 5:17, 23; 10:30, 38; 12:45; 14:9,11; 15:3, 24; 17:5, 21, 23; Phil. 2:6; Col 1:15, 19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3; 1 Jn. 2:21, 23, 24; Rev. 3:21.

Fifth, He performs **the works of God**

(1) *in creating*, Jn. 1:3, 10; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:10; Rev. 3:14;

(2) *in preserving and upholding*, Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3;

(3) *in forgiving sins*, Mk. 2:5, 10; Luke 7:48-50; Acts 5:31;

- (4) *in imparting of everlasting life*, Lk. 23:42, 43; Jn. 5:25, 40; 6:47; 10:10, 28; 17:2;
- (5) *in bestowing the Spirit and all spiritual blessings*, Lk.17:5; 24:49; Jn. 14:13; 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:4-6; Eph. 4:7; Phil. 4:13;
- (6) *in raising the dead*, John 5:21, 25-29; 6:40; 11:25; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16;
- (7) *in judging the world*, Matt. 7:22; 16:27; 25:31; Jn. 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 1:7; 22:12.

Sixth, He possesses **the attributes and perfections of God**, for

- (1) *He is said to be eternal*, Mic. 5:2, compared with Matt. 2:6; Jn. 1:2; 8:56, 58; 17:5, 24; Acts 3:15; Heb. 1:11, 12; Rev. 1:17; 22:23;
- (2) *Omnipresent*, Matt. 18:20; 28:20; Jn. 3:13; Eph. 1:23;
- (3) *Omniscient*. Matt. 9:4; 12:25; Mk. 2:8; Lk. 6:8; 9:47; 10:22; Jn. 1:48; 2:24, 25; 16:30; 21:17; Rev. 2:23;
- (4) *Omnipotent*. Matt. 18:18; Jn. 5:17; 10:18; 1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 1:17; 2:10; Heb. 7:25; Rev. 1:8;
- (5) *Unchangeable*, Heb. 1:11, 12; 7:24; 13:8;
- (6) *Infinitely wise and loving*, 1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3; Eph. 3:19;
- (7) *Sinless*, Mk. 10:18; Jn. 8:29, 46; 14:30; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5.

Seventh, He claimed and received **divine worship**.

Compare Exod. 20: 3; Matt. 4:10; Acts 14:14; Rev. 19:10, with Matt. 2:2, 11; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9; Lk.24:52; Jn. 9: 38; 20:28; Acts 7:59; Phil. 2:10; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:9-14; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rom. 1:7, and the beginning of all the Epistles.

If such a being is not God, there is no God; but, blessed be His name for ever and ever, the believer is hanging his interests for time and for eternity upon the arm of One who is almighty, and who by Himself purged our sins. Love cannot stoop lower than when He descended to the cross; love cannot rise higher than when it lifts us to His throne.

“THOU,” “THY”, AND “THEE”

Dr. Oswald T. Allis (1948)

Born in 1880, Oswald Allis taught at Princeton Theological Seminary; and then, in 1929, along with J. Gresham Machen, Robert Dick Wilson, and others, he founded Westminster Theological Seminary. Allis was among the greatest Presbyterian theologians and Bible scholars of the twentieth century. He died in 1973.

We believe, that the farther translators depart from the style of the document they are translating, the more complicated does their problem become, the greater will be the variety in the translations proposed, and the greater will be the danger of the translation becoming an interpretation. Doctor Burrows lays down what we believe to be the true governing principle for all accurate translating, when he says “the translator can only follow his text, leaving it for the commentator to explain”. Many of the difficulties in which our revisers have become involved are the direct result of their failure to observe this fundamental rule.

An especially important example of this, because of its doctrinal implications, is their rendering of the second person singular where it occurs in the Greek text.

It is a well-known fact that in contemporary English the forms “thou,” “thy,” “thine”, have almost disappeared from secular use. They are largely restricted to the language of religious devotion, in which they are constantly employed, and which is largely formed by, and owes its peculiarities to, the Authorised Version. Consequently, it is often asserted or assumed that the usage of the Authorised Version represents the speech of 300 [now, 400] years ago, and that now three [four] centuries later it should be changed to accord with contemporary usage. But this is not at all a correct statement of the problem. The important fact is this: the usage of the Authorized Version is not the ordinary usage of the early seventeenth century: it is the Biblical usage based

on the style of the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures. The second part of this statement needs no proof and will be challenged by no-one. It is undeniable that where the Hebrew and Greek use the singular of the pronoun, the Authorised Version regularly uses the singular (“thou”, “thy”, and “thee”), and where they use the plural, it uses the plural (“you”, “your”, and “ye”). Even in Deuteronomy where, in his addresses, and apparently for rhetorical and pedagogical effect, Moses often changes suddenly and seemingly arbitrarily from singular to plural or from plural to singular, the Authorised Version reproduces the style of the text with fidelity. That is to say, the usage of the Authorised Version is strictly Biblical.

The first part of the above statement is not quite so easy to prove, but there is abundant evidence to support it. According to the late Professor Lounsbury of Yale, the substitution of the plural for the singular in addressing an individual “made its appearance in the English language toward the close of the thirteenth century ... In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the use of the plural steadily increased, and in the sixteenth century it became the standard form of polite conversation ... For some two centuries it may be said that in a general way they (the “thou” “thy” and “thee”) were employed to denote affection or inferiority or contempt.”

If the correctness of Lounsbury’s statement is admitted, it is quite obvious that the Authorised Version did not attempt to make the usage of the Hebrew and Greek conform to the usage of the Elizabethan or early Jacobean period. It simply followed the Biblical usage, despite the fact that for some three hundred years the trend had been increasingly away from it.

The following words of A.T. Robertson are worthy of careful pondering in this connection: “No-one today speaks the English of the King James Version, or ever did for that matter, for, though like Shakespeare, it is the pure Anglo-Saxon, yet unlike Shakespeare, it reproduces to a remarkable extent the spirit and language of the Bible.” This is its great claim to distinction, the reason it has endeared itself to multitudes of English-speaking people for more than

three centuries: it reproduces to a remarkable extent the spirit and language of the Bible.

The real issue seems clearly to be whether or not we are prepared to accept the radical position and give up the use of the singular of the pronoun entirely (“thou”, “thy” and “thee”).

There are two main objections to this. The first is that it gives up the attempt to retain in English a distinction which is clearly drawn in Hebrew and Greek.

The second is that it means that “thou” and “thee” and “thy” are to pass completely out of twentieth-century English. The singular form of the pronoun is not even to be tolerated in the language of devotion and worship. It is to disappear from the Lord’s Prayer (cf. “Your name be revered! Your kingdom come!”). Scores of our most familiar and best-loved hymns will then have to be discarded or more or less drastically edited; and the liturgies of the liturgical churches (e.g. the Te Deum) will need a thorough overhauling, if such a radical change is to be carried through successfully. If such a change is to be made, this is unquestionably the simplest and easiest way to make it.

We do not believe the change is necessary. Nor do we believe that the vast majority of Christian people desire it or will accept it.

THE VEILED PICTURE

Lady Hope

A large man-of-war ship stood in the northern harbour of Hull. I happened to be staying at the time with some friends, near the town, and received with them an invitation to spend an afternoon on board the ship.

Our visit was full of interest, for the Captain was kindness itself, and showed us everything. He then took us over his own cabin, which was full of all sorts

of knick-knacks and treasures that could remind him of home – pictures, photographs and tiny ornaments.

I immediately noticed one picture, with a crimson silk curtain thrown across it, and, yielding to the impulse of the moment, I made a remark to this effect: “What is that picture which has the curtain drawn across it?”

A moment’s consideration might have told me that such a question ought not to have been asked. However, the sequel proved that I had done wisely in making the enquiry. The Captain took not the slightest notice of what I had said, and in a few minutes took us out of the cabin. We went to tea, after which he came up to me, and began speaking in a low voice: “You noticed just now a covered picture in my cabin – I do not, as a rule, show it to strangers; but if you will return with me, we can lift aside the curtain, and you shall hear its history.”

I made apologies for the inadvertent remark; but when we entered his cabin, and he removed the curtain this was the sight I saw: a ship enveloped in flames, not far from a rocky shore. At its stern their hung a rope, and on that rope a figure. The Captain, who was a very grave, thoughtful-looking man, well-known in the Service for his bravery and long-distinguished acts, simply pointed to the figure with the words:

“That was me!” He said. “My ship caught fire as we were nearing the shore, and all the crew left in boats. For a short time I stood there alone.”

“Then I felt the flames drawing nearer to me, and I knew that any moment might be my last, so I made my way to the stern of the ship, uncoiling a rope which I fastened round my waist, and then flung myself overboard. I hung suspended as you see, between fire and water for a short time. I cannot tell you how long. It might have been a few minutes; but in that short space of time the whole of my life came before me. The most trifling details of my early years came vividly before me. I felt as if I was hanging between Time and Eternity!

“At that moment I saw life in a new light: and then I knew nothing more. I must have dropped into the water as the rope burned away, for I can only say that three weeks after this occurrence, I came to my senses, and found myself in a small room of a coastguard’s house on the shore.

“I looked round, for everything was strange to me, and I asked the question – ‘Where am I?’ “The answer was – ‘You are saved, sir.’ “And then I was told the history of that strange night. It all came back to me as I lay there. I requested to be left alone. I turned my face to the wall and fervently prayed there and then that God would save me through His mercy in Christ Jesus.

“I confessed the past, and vowed that from that hour my life and time should be His. I also vowed that as soon as I was able to do so, I would have a picture painted from my own description of the occurrence of that fearful night, that I might always have it by my bedside and look at it morning and evening in order to help me keep in mind my resolutions and the never-to-be-forgotten events of that night.”

The expression of my friend’s countenance as he told me this story, the solemn, intense gravity with which he looked at that picture, imprinted itself on my heart, and I have never forgotten it. It was all such a tremendous reality to him.

Only a very few years afterwards, he was coming home with his ship from Halifax and suddenly and strangely the ship disappeared. This is all that is known. No portions of wreck were ever found, nor the faintest news heard of the noble commander and his magnificent vessel. It was lost on the high seas.

For months his friends refused to believe that he had really gone from them; but now many years have elapsed since the day of that mysterious catastrophe when that ship, with all on board, perished in the Atlantic.

When I think of that little picture, I would remind my friends to be ready, for we all stand today between Time and Eternity! Are you prepared? Do you

know where you are going? Have you ever given your whole hearts, your very selves to the Divine Redeemer, that you may experience the free salvation which God has given, and devote your lives in service to the Lord Jesus Christ?

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE IN THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Malcolm H. Watts

We know little about the prophet Hosea, who was evidently a young man when the Word came to him. He appears to have ministered as a prophet for some thirty years (probably 755 - 725BC) during one of the darkest periods of Israel's history.

Hosea lived to see four kings in the Northern Kingdom murdered – Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah and Pekah. The ruin of the kingdom was the climax to all the tragedies which overtook God's ancient people. It was, of course, a judgment: a consequence of the spiritual and moral decline in that favoured but ungrateful nation.

Hosea, whose name means "*salvation*", preaches on this theme throughout his prophecy; and while he exposes national apostasy and threatens inevitable punishment, he holds out to the people gracious promises, especially to those who are penitent and believing. Also, he looks forward to the day when a spiritual kingdom would be established under the one Head, whom he describes as 'David their king' – which clearly refers to great David's greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Hosea 3:5; Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23,24; 37:22,24).

An analysis of the book is not easy to make; but perhaps the following divisions may prove helpful. In the first three chapters we are shown God's *relationship to Israel*, and, of course, to all His true people in the spiritual sense. A symbolic action on the part of Hosea shows God's wonderful love, and highlights that love in contrast with Israel's unfaithfulness.

Then, in the section from chapter 4 to the end of the book, we have a number of *threatenings* and *promises*. In chapters 4-10, there are threatenings of judgement against the people, the priests and the princes. Chapters 11-14 mainly contain promises of mercy (despite the people's sins) and promises that a people restored unto God would know His richest blessing.

In this article we shall be considering only the first main section,

God's relationship to His people, symbolised by Hosea's marriage to Gomer (chapters 1-3).

Hosea is commanded to take "a wife of whoredoms" or "harlotries" (Hosea 1:2), that is, an unchaste, unclean woman, by whom he was to have "children of whoredoms", later named as Jezreel, Loruhamah and Loammi (1:4,6,8). As a result of her unfaithfulness, Gomer experiences separation from Hosea (2:1-5). But in spite of all this, Hosea's love for her continues; and refusing to put her away or have her put to death, as legally he could have done (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22), he "bought her" (Hosea 3:2), presumably from her lover (see: 3:1) for "fifteen pieces of silver", half the price of a slave (Exodus 21:32), that in the future she may be chaste and pure, in an abiding union with her true husband (Hosea 3:1-3). Then, as he determined before, saying "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths" (2:6), he brought upon her great trouble and sorrow; and, according to his earlier words "and now will I discover her lewdness" (2:10), he exposed her for what she was and convinced her of her wickedness and folly. After this, he dealt kindly with her even as he promised: "Behold, I will allure her", that is, draw her by my love, "into the wilderness", some quiet and solitary place, "and speak comfortably to her", literally "speak to her heart." (2:14) Thus Hosea fulfilled the desire he had expressed – "I will betroth thee unto me for ever" – and he brought Gomer into the blessing of an everlasting contract, a covenant which would stand and never be broken. (2:19).

Is all this to be regarded as parable, vision, or history? Calvin seemed to think it a kind of parable. Hosea, he says, assumed a character and the whole event

was a dramatic parable. But there is no real indication of this in the text, and the names given both to Gomer, and then to her children, militate against this view. The narrative reads as *historical fact*.

Is it all a vision? Jeremiah Burroughs, the Puritan, thought so. In his famous Puritan Commentary on Hosea (now republished), he maintains that all these events appeared to Hosea in a vision. But this suffers from the same defect as the former view, and it also fails to explain the intensity of the prophet's feelings, which come through the text and narrative.

Is it, then, history? Thomas Scott and many other commentators believe that it is. The prophet, he says, 'was called to his prophetic office in a very remarkable way.' Certainly the words, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms..." find parallels elsewhere in the prophetic books where they can only be understood literally (Is. 7:3; 8:1; 20:2; Jer. 13:1; 18:1,2; 19:1,2; Ezekiel 4:1,2; 5:1). We take this to be the most consistent and therefore the most acceptable view.

How should we then view and understand these first three chapters? It seems to me that we are to discover in them a revelation of the doctrine of grace. If we see in Gomer a picture of people fallen and in shame, and if we see in Hosea the God of all grace lamenting over their miserable and wretched state, desiring and effecting their spiritual recovery, then, I believe, we shall gain insight into the mind of the Holy Spirit and discover a rich vein of truth in this part of God's Word.

Total Depravity

First of all, total depravity is taught here, especially in reference to Gomer as "a wife of whoredoms." (1:2) This indicates she was a woman particularly known for her departures and for her uncleanness. It is a similar expression to that found elsewhere in the Old Testament – "a man of blood" – which denotes a man particularly distinguished by cruelty and given to crimes of

violence and murder (2 Samuel 16:7). The problem in Gomer is the problem in all mankind, in that their hearts of all sinners are false and wicked through and through. It was Gomer's deceitful heart that led her to depart from her lawful husband, even as it is the deceitful hearts of sinners that incline them to leave the true and the living God to go "a whoring" after other objects of their choice. (Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Hebrews 3:12)

Departing from Hosea, she gave free play to her corruptions (she played the harlot). Even so, sinners, turning away from God, throw off all restraint, sinning with a 'high-hand' (Numbers 15:30; Genesis 6:5; 2 Peter 2:14). Gomer, representing sinners, was in love with her sins. (Proverbs 21:10; John 3:19, 20)

In ancient times, harlots covered and adorned themselves (Proverbs 7:10) and used fragrant perfume (7:17) to make what was essentially loathsome, acceptable. Similarly, sinners will go to great lengths to hide their vile and dreadful sins, but whatever they do, it makes their sins no less odious. (Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 23:14, 25, 27). Did not Gomer have a conscience about what she did? It does not appear so, just as sinners have no conscience over how they behave. The apostle Paul tells us that this is all part of their depravity, even their "consciences" are "seared", literally, "cauterized", so that they are deprived of sensitivity, deadened. (1 Timothy 4:2)

Hosea looking upon Gomer, surely hated what he saw in her. It was to him a great grief and a provocation. And is it not so when God looks upon men and women in their fallen state, seeing their wretchedness: is He not profoundly disturbed by what He sees in their hearts and lives?

Unconditional Election

Amazingly, Hosea "loved" Gomer, even in her heinous sin; and he went and "took" her, according to chapter 1 and verse 3. The Hebrew word for "take" in verse 2 and 3 is the word used for "choosing" a bride. (Genesis 4:19; 6:2; 11:29; 12:19) This action of his finds a parallel in God's eternal, sovereign and

free election. (Matthew 24:22, 31; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13)
We observe that the initiative was definitely with Hosea. He went and took Gomer. And so it is in election. The initiative is not with sinners; the initiative is with God, who, before time began, chose to love a fallen people and then loved the people of His choice – “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” (Jeremiah 31.3)

Josiah Conder expressed this truth in the following words:

“Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee
Hadst Thou not chosen me.”

The prophet’s choice was of one individual, his choice was personal and particular. Divine election, of course, is not of a single person, but of countless millions, and yet it is still very special and it does concern individuals. Hence, we read of “the elect lady” (2 John 1) and God says in His Word, “Jacob have I loved” and mention is made of “Rufus, chosen in the Lord.” (Romans 9:13; 16:13) It is not an election of a class or a group, but of certain specific men and women.

For Hosea, his choice meant that Gomer would be his for all time. God’s purpose in His electing love is the same: namely, that sinners beloved might be saved and be for Him and to with Him for evermore. So the Scriptures teach: “He hath chosen us...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” (Ephesians 1:4).

The *unconditional* aspect of election is to be drawn from the fact that Hosea saw in Gomer, and in her ways, *nothing* pure or lovely which might have attracted him. Why did he then love such a woman? He loved her simply because he would love her. That is exactly how it is with God. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord

loved you... (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8) That is why it is called, not the election of merit, but “the election of grace.” (Romans 11:5)

Limited Atonement

Did Hosea buy all the female slaves in Israel? No, he did not. He purchased only Gomer, upon whom he had already set the love of his heart. Presented to us here is the doctrine of Limited Atonement or Particular Redemption, that God in Christ died only for the elect – He purchased, not all sinners of mankind, no, not even potentially, but His beloved people whom He had chosen. (John 10:15, 17, 18; Ephesians 5:25). As Scripture plainly says, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Revelation 5:9) Hosea was *particular* in his redeeming activity, and likewise God has been *particular* in His.

Redemption is the act of “buying back” or “recovering by means of a stipulated payment.” It presupposes prior possession; and, just as Gomer originally belonged to Hosea but he found it necessary to pay a price for her freedom (Hosea 3:1,2), so, by virtue of election, God’s people were His from all eternity, but, when lost in sin and degradation, He was moved to buy them back with the precious blood of His Son. (Job 33:24; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18, 19)

Hosea paid “fifteen pieces of silver” for Gomer (Hosea 3:2), but, in the book of Psalms, we read: “the redemption of their soul is precious.” (Psalm 49:8) Truly, not one of us can give a ransom for another. God’s redemption through Christ is far above human price and can never be accomplished by such ordinary means. It is “redemption through His blood.” (Ephesians 1:7)

So we see it plainly: as Hosea was *particular* in his redeeming activity, so likewise God has been *particular* in His. He has redeemed *His people* from death, the grave, judgement, and hell.

Irresistible Grace

Irresistible grace, or effectual calling, is also taught in this wonderful portion of Scripture.

After securing her freedom, Hosea came and spoke to Gomer, even as he said he would: “I will allure her (that is, lovingly and tenderly *persuade* her)...and speak comfortably to her (using words which wonderfully comfort her heart).” (Hosea 2:14) It points to the way God, in conversion, “draws” His people and “makes them willing.” (Genesis 9:27; John 6:44. Psalm 110:3a)

Hosea’s words to Gomer are recorded for us: “Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.” (Hosea 3:3) We should note the force of his words, “thou shalt ... thou shalt... thou shalt...” These were not weak and empty declarations, but prophetic words, indicating that Gomer’s recovery would certainly take place. This is true of God’s special call to elect sinners. This call, to be distinguished from the general call of the gospel, comes to them “not...in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance (1 Thessalonians 1:5; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4). It achieves the divine intention. It proves irresistible. It is always effectual.

In the prophet’s approach to his beloved Gomer, there was a convicting force, as he convinced her of previous wrong-doing – “Thou shalt abide with me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot...” (Hosea 3:3; cf. 2:6-13); and revealed to her his willingness to pardon and receive her – “Thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.” (3:3; cf. 2:14-18). The result was that she was humbled and consoled, and so affected in her heart that she embraced her ever-loving husband in a covenant never to be broken. It is even so in conversion or, to state it more accurately, in effectual calling. As the Shorter Catechism says, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us

to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.” [Question 31] There is a branch of it which we call ‘humiliation’, involving conviction of sin, but it is followed by enlightenment and persuasion and the end result is that sinners are brought into a spiritual relationship with the Son of God.

Final Perseverance

Ponder those words of chapter 3, verse 3 – “thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.” They show that Hosea would be faithful to her, and bound to her. It is explained further, and very beautifully, in chapter 2, where the prophet is declaring what he will do – “I will betroth thee unto me *for ever*... I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.” (verses 19 and 20). He promises a union in marriage which will be as permanent as it is blessed. The Lord promises no less. The marriage contract with Him is an everlasting one and although there may come afflictions, temptations and even desertions, nothing shall ever separate them from Him (Romans 8:38,39). Kept, guarded and preserved by the Lord Himself (Psalm 37:28; 66:8, 9; 97:10; 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 Peter 1:3-5), all His chosen redeemed – and called people shall endure to the end. (Job 17:9; Matthew 10:22; Hebrews 12:2) Not one of them will be lost, but all of them will be saved – and saved for evermore.

“The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet.
Things future or things that are now.
Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forgoe,
Or sever my soul from His love”

Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740-1778

A SOLEMN TRUTH

Two friends met on the street. They had just heard of the sudden death of a mutual acquaintance, possessed of great wealth.

"What has he left?" asked one.

"He has left ALL," was the abrupt and unexpected reply.

Yes, and when you come to die, you will leave all - your friends, your home, your pleasures, your money, your all.

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy 6:7)

But there is one thing, you would give worlds to be able to leave behind, but you cannot - YOUR SINS, which you cannot leave behind unless you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and experience the cleansing power of His blood.

"The blood of Jesus Christ (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7)

THE BROKEN SAFE

A young man in America, the son of a wealthy Christian business man, had become wayward and careless, and finally, quarrelling with his father because he had refused him all the money he demanded, he had left home in anger and given himself up to a totally reckless life.

For a long time he continued as an abandoned wanderer. At last, his money ran out, he was brought to the verge of desperation and he determined to break into his father's house, in the absence of the family, thinking that he could find the means to relieve his acute needs. "My father owes me a living,"

he said to himself, “and I will have it!”

He succeeded in effecting an entrance into the house. He also managed to break into the safe and, amid the stillness of the house, he began his search, going through some obviously valuable papers. He found, amongst the rest, His Father’s Will.

He began to read it and, to his utter astonishment, he found his name among the heirs, and a very large bequest set against it. At first he could hardly believe his eyes. The father with whom he had quarrelled, against whom he had cherished such bitterness, had retained his name in his Will, and was still intending to give him his portion with the rest? “Can it be,” he said to himself, “that my father loves me, in spite of all my hostility and bitterness toward him? Can it be that, in spite of the dishonour I have brought upon him, he is still ready to treat me as a son?”

Such was the effect of these thoughts, that they were the means of bringing him to repentance and to reconciliation with his father. How little he dreamt that his father so loved him. And have not your thoughts about God been similar? You have tried to shut God out of your thoughts, or, this being impossible, you have only thought of Him as One Who was angry with you.

How did you come to have such mistaken ideas? If you only knew that He loves you and would embrace you, assuring you of His full and free forgiveness and freely giving to you a glorious and heavenly inheritance. “But,” you say, “I do not think peace is to be secured so easily. Do you mean to say that I may believe that God loves me and will forgive me my many and grievous sins, because His Son has died for sinners like me, and so, at once, I may have peace and rest?”

I do mean it, or, rather, God means it: for He says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will

abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:7). And again, he says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” (1 Peter 1:3, 4)

Yes! Peace is found – not by reforming and not by feeling – but first by hearing, then by believing the Gospel, and then by receiving the Lord Jesus and trusting in what He has done for poor lost sinners.

A GREAT WONDER

Mr. Guthrie, an eminent minister in Scotland, was one evening travelling home very late. Having lost his way on a moor, he laid the reins upon the neck of his horse, and committed himself to the direction of providence.

After long travelling over ditches and fields, the horse brought him to a farmer’s house, into which he went, and requested permission to sit by the fire till morning, which was granted. A popish priest was administering extreme unction to the mistress of the house, who was dying.

Mr. Guthrie said nothing till the priest had retired. Then he went forward to the dying woman, and asked her if she enjoyed peace in the prospect of death, in consequence of what the priest had said and done for her. She answered she did not; on which he spoke to her of salvation through the atoning blood of the Redeemer. The Lord taught her to understand, and enabled her to believe the message of mercy, and she died triumphing in Jesus Christ as her Saviour. After witnessing this astonishing scene, Mr. Guthrie mounted his horse and rode home. On his arriving, he told Mrs. Guthrie he had seen a great wonder during the night. “I came,” said he, to a farm house, where I found a woman in a state of *nature*; I saw her in a state of *grace*; and I left her in a state of *glory*.”

EPILOGUE

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" Hebrews 4:9

The word "rest", that occurs several times in this chapter, is a translation of two different Greek words. One refers to a "place of rest", and the other refers to a "state of rest" and it is the latter that is used in this verse. It is also clear from the context that this state of rest is in the future and is the believer's eternal rest in the presence of their God.

Our current spiritual life is a mixture of great joy arising from the love and mercy God bestows upon us and great sadness due to our own sinfulness, the trials and tribulations we meet in the world and from the attacks of the devil. But our future life in heaven will be one of pure joy, and no sadness. On earth we need to have a "place of rest" to give us strength and to refresh our bodies for our labours for the Lord and the spiritual battles we have to fight. However, in heaven, our bodies will not need to have a "place of rest", but we will enjoy an eternal "state of rest".

This "rest" is not to be understood as a cessation of activity. In heaven all our time is to be taken up with worshipping and praising our God – for we shall see Him with our eyes and perceive Him in all His glorious attributes. Our understanding will be enlightened to comprehend the magnitude of the love of God for us and the lengths to which He went to obtain our salvation. Eternity will be fully occupied with such worship, and we will never grow weary of praising our God.

We need to remind ourselves frequently that we do have a "rest" and that soon we will enter into it. This life, with its trials and tribulations, will only last for a finite period of time, until our God, in his infinite wisdom, calls us to that eternal "state of rest" when we will be forever with the Lord. Until then we must pray for daily grace and strength, knowing that the Lord will supply all our need according to his riches in glory.

Bill Norton