

A HAPPY UNION

A Story of the Prophet Hosea.

BY THE "HIGHWAY AND BYWAY" PREACHER

The Prophet Hosea—The name means "salvation," and in the personal history of the prophet—which many of the deepest and most spiritual Bible scholars such as G. Campbell Morgan, of England, and James M. Gray, dean of the Moody Bible Institute, consider a literal portrayal of the prophet's life—we find a type or illustration of Jehovah's relations to Israel. Hosea's field of labor was Israel, and he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, about 745 B. C., down to the captivity. An outline of the book is as follows: 1. Historical-prophetic, chapters 1 to 3; 2. General discourses, chapters 4 to 14; 3. Promises, chapter 14, (a) Appeal of God, vs. 1-3; (b) Promised blessing, vs. 4-7; (c) Application to all, v. 8. The personal history of the prophet may be divided into three periods as follows: (1) A Happy Union—The prophet marries a woman who had lived an impure life, but who had reformed. (2) A Ruined Home—Three children came to bless the home, and then the wife, forgetful of obligations of wifehood and motherhood, deserts her home for her former lover. (3) Love Unfailing—But her true lover's hand never loses sight of her, and at last she has sunk to the very depths of sin, he buys her back so that he may restore her to her old place in the home.

A Happy Union—This period in the prophet's life is a type of Jehovah's union with a non-righteous people, Israel. Note in the complete nature of the names of the children born of this union, and also the promises of restoration and blessing for Israel in the latter days.

Scripture Authority—The Book of Hosea, especially chapter 1.

SERMONETTE.

Love will travel far and stoop low to save the object of that affection. How may we know the strength of the Divine love save as some faint conception of it is borne in upon the heart through the revelation of the human relationship?

All through those long years the love of Hosea followed the wayward wife while she sank lower and lower, until at last she had touched the very depths of human degradation. Deserted by her lovers and sold as a slave into the lowest forms of iniquity, still the husband love follows, and is strong enough to bring him to her side and to redeem her by paying the price of her enslavement.

How like this is the Divine love. "While we were yet in our sins, Christ died for the ungodly." From the heaven above God was able to reach down to his infinite love and find a way to save lost and ruined man. And if God has so manifested his love towards us in that he has given his only begotten Son that we might be delivered from the slavery into which sin has plunged us, how ought we to follow his example and hold on to the wayward soul and love, and love, and love yet still more until at last love is triumphant?

It is not love that casts off forever the one who has done the wrong and who never thinks or purposes that the transgressor shall be won back.

Sin of one against another does not relieve of obligation, but rather does it obligate the one against whom the sin has been committed to help the erring one back to the right way of living.

True love not only can stoop low but it can wait long. But there is reward in the waiting, for love must triumph, and at last the wayward one is brought to the place where it can hear love's message and be stirred to high and holy aspirations. How wonderful is the love that never fails.

THE STORY.

IT WAS in the days of the wicked King Jeroboam II, ruler over the northern kingdom of Israel, that a son was born to Beeri, a devout man, and one that kept himself free from the corrupting influences all about. Now, there was nothing in the birth of this child that marked it as different from that of multitudes of other children throughout the kingdom, save that with the coming of the babe there had been given a vision to the father, and he had insisted on calling the name of the boy Hosea, for, said he: "He shall bring a message of salvation to his nation."

the mangled and bleeding body of the other, but rather those battles in which temptation to sinful indulgence are overcome, and the fight is made for the maintenance of righteousness.

While yet a tender lad Hosea had come under the influence of Jonah the prophet, and had been deeply impressed with the great mercy and love of God as manifested in his dealings with the wicked Nineveh, under the preaching of the prophet. He was familiar with all the history of his nation and was a close student of the current times and conditions.

And because he was such a man as he was, because he had profited by the instruction of his father and had yielded himself to the perfect will and law of God, it became known in his early manhood that God had called him to fill the place of prophet to Israel. He knew it because in the hour of quiet communion he had heard the voice of God calling him to the work, and the people among whom he mingled knew it because the man with a God-given message is always recognized, even though the message may be spurned and rejected.

But one thing greatly troubled Hosea, and that was the self-satisfied condition of the people. In their prosperity and the pleasurable ease in which they lived the people appeared utterly unconscious of their need of God. What more could be desired than ease and comfort and a good time? So it was that Hosea found his message to the nation made no impression. What was there that he could do to make them realize their condition and their need?

At such a time as this a strange thing happened, or rather it was not such a strange thing, after all, for love is always mysterious. Hosea had fallen in love with a beautiful young woman named Gomer, but one about whom there clung the dark stories of a wayward life. And strange as it may appear, this beautiful woman seemed to return the warmth of his affection and seemed to find a real joy in the things that were nearest and dearest to the heart of the young prophet.

But the woman's past troubled Hosea, and his friends urged upon him the folly and danger of yielding to such associations. "Knowest thou not what God has said in judgment upon the woman who plays the harlot?" "Yes," quickly retorted the prophet, "and knowest thou not how the grace and mercy of God can exalt such a harlot as Rahab was and make of her an exalted name and tribe?"

Strange indeed was the romantic experience of the prophet, but he did not understand the purpose God had in it all until one day in vexation of spirit over the problem that confronted him in reaching the hearts of the people, and making them realize their great need of God, there came to him the thought: "How is it that the holy God can desire to be the God of such a sinful and wayward people? Surely it is not that the people can give to God so much as what God can give to the people."

And almost in the next instant there swept over his heart the thought of the life of this woman who, had so unexpectedly and strangely entered into his life. "Yes, in this shall Israel see an example of herself," exclaimed the prophet as he arose, conscious that the spirit of God had spoken to his heart and was leading him.

With unflinching step the prophet made his way to the presence of Gomer, and ere long all the community about knew that the prophet had pledged his truth to the woman with a past. "What could it mean?" asked the people one of another, "that this man of God should link his life with such an one? How can there be anything in common between the two?" "How is it," retorted the prophet, "when he heard their words, 'that God should consider this people who have gone after other gods and hath forgotten him? Why is it, in spite of the wickedness and disobedience of the past, that God desires union with them? What fellowship can he have with such as you? Think on these things, and realize that the love and mercy of God are able to bridge the chasm which sin has made, and that he finds joy in bringing the sinner into union and fellowship with himself."

Clouds Have Queer Forms. How many people know that the clouds have definite forms, says Arthur W. Clayton of the Royal Albert Memorial college, Exeter, Eng. in an Memorial college, Exeter, Eng. in an article on "Clouds" in Harper's Magazine. The short curling wisps that rise in bunches or long parallels, are tremely beautiful, but delicate, are called cumulus clouds. Alto clouds are called cumulo nimbus, and are denser, and dim the sun or hide it, denser, and solid clouds that are brilliant and solid clouds that are never fidescent, but are the most splendid of all in the sky when sunset colors fall upon them.

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