

Series: **The Scandal of Grace** – week 1 of 11

CDOBC – beginning on 9/10/17

Today's Title: "**Gomer and Grace**"

September 10, 2017 - Hosea 1-3

OBJECTIVE: To help people understand the glorious and messy grace of God.

Opening Prayer

There was a preacher who was well respected in the community, and he was single. As you can imagine, every time he was seen talking with a single woman, the whole town knew about it before their conversation was done.

The life of a preacher is not an easy one to marry into, and he knew this, so he was very careful and very selective when considering a young lady's marriage potential.

For years, he had been praying about this important choice, and one day he was certain of hearing God's voice directing him to marry a certain young lady.

He was surprised...he didn't think she was cut out to be a preacher's wife. He prayed some more...same response from God...he wrestled with God, much like we read about Jacob wrestling with God. However, no matter how much he wrestled with God and questioned God about this, God's answer was, "***Trust Me...Obey Me.***"

He was absolutely certain about God's leading in this situation - and if there's anything he's learned over the years

of ministry, it's this: When you know God is leading, you need to follow...even if you have questions!

So, one night, he took this young lady out to a nice dinner, and he proposed to her before the desert was served!

She said 'Yes', and before he walked her home, the news had spread through the entire town!

They were married, and what a ceremony it was!

The young preacher was now married, and life began to settle into a new routine for both.

It wasn't long, until she was excited and told him the news:

"I'm pregnant!"

Their first-born was a boy. They thought up a very special name...one that had great meaning and symbolism.

Everything was going well. The baby was healthy and growing, but he sensed something wasn't right.

Something had changed. Of course, lots of things change after the first child...but this was different. Something had changed in her heart. He could sense it...he knew it...but he couldn't identify it at first, so life continued.

Then child #2 was born - a girl!

About 3 years later she conceived again, and boy#2 arrived.

Soon after child #3, his world fell apart.

One day he discovered evidence of his wife having an affair.

He was devastated...but at the same time, he wasn't surprised. That evening, after the kids were in bed, he confronted her with the evidence of the affair.

Tears were shed...but only by him.

She was unconcerned...almost seemed relieved for the affair to be out in the open.

The conversation didn't improve things...but it did highlight the massive problem he was facing.

As a preacher in a small town, this was "problematic".

He couldn't explain this to anyone, and as the months rolled by, she was less concerned with public perception.

He soon discovered that she wasn't having *an* affair, but multiple affairs!

He tried talking to her, but it only caused her to get angry and she eventually moved out.

To support her *independent living and freedom*, she began to prostitute herself.

The young preacher was trying to raise 3 young children, preach the Word of God, while his wife was fully immersed in a life of prostitution.

Embarrassment...anger...tremendous sorrow and pain...this was his emotional reality every single day.

He questioned if he ever really heard the voice of God. *How could God tell him to marry her when He knew this was*

going to happen? God's message of ***"Trust Me...Obey Me"*** was a riddle he couldn't untangle.

One night he couldn't sleep, and God spoke to him again.

The message from God was clear - but he was confused.

He wrestled with God again...only to hear the same words again, ***"Trust Me...Obey Me"***.

The message from God was this:

Go, find your wife, and buy her freedom from her pimp.

Bring her home to you and the kids - and love her.

Tell her you love her...she is home...she is your wife and you are her husband...and you love her.

Tell her she is no longer to live as a prostitute, but she is to be committed to you only.

This story is the story of the prophet Hosea and Gomer, his wife.

It's a real-life story - and it demonstrates the undying love of God for His people, Israel.

It's a story where grace invades where sin has increased.

Turn in your bible to the book of Hosea. (Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah)

Today I'm beginning a new series. It will be a series which makes some of you uncomfortable. It will be a series which will put some of you at a loss for words and with more

questions than answers, because grace does not sprout from the human heart or mind.

Grace finds its origin in the heart of God.

Grace is scandalous, it's unfair, and it's illogical.

Ironically, grace makes many people in church very uneasy.

When we truly understand the grace of God toward sinners, we will begin to see how amazing it is!

Hebrews 12:15a

“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God...”

In Greek, the root word for ‘grace’ in the verb form means *“to rejoice”* or *“I am glad”* (What's So Amazing About Grace, by Phillip Yancey, p. 14).

If you've been around a lot of church people over the years, ‘rejoicing’ and ‘gladness’ is not usually the first words which come to mind.

As followers of Christ and those who study the Bible, why is the public's perception of us so contrary to the greatest truth of Christianity?

Grace is the one thing we can offer the world which nobody else can offer.

Any group can build homes, feed the homeless, care for the sick and orphans, **BUT WE HAVE GRACE!!**

Why do we look and act as if we not only don't know about grace, but we haven't ever experienced grace (*when the opposite is true*)?

If the world cannot find grace alive and well in the church, where else will they find it?

I just spend the last 9 Sundays proving the point that throughout history, God has saved people - chosen people - not just for their own spiritual benefit and blessing, but so those He chooses can bless others so more and more people will worship God.

If we are obedient to this calling...if we get serious about *reaching people for Christ*, we must be ready to love them and lavish them with the grace of Christ.

For this to happen, we must know about grace - but our knowledge of grace cannot be merely intellectual.

It must be much more than a definition on our theological outline.

We must experience grace - we must learn about God's grace at a heart level - grace must strike at our emotions.

Over the next 11 Sundays, we will walk through this amazing topic of God's grace, together.

So, buckle up - and get ready - to be amazed by God's grace, as we uncover and reveal "The Scandal of Grace".

Hosea was a prophet who ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel about 700-800 years before Christ.

He was a contemporary to the prophets Isaiah and Micah, who ministered primarily in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Hosea's career was long - anywhere from 50-75 years, and he served during the reign of many kings.

His life was a true-to-reality picture of God's grace to Israel - and by extension, it's a picture of God's grace to the followers of Christ.

I'll walk you through the first 3 chapters of Hosea, as we see the truly scandalous nature of God's grace.

These chapters are a mix of instructions to Hosea, and prophecy about Israel's future.

Hosea's marriage and Israel's adultery 1:2-9

Read 1:2-9

God commands Hosea to marry, and then tells him his wife would become a prostitute.

This is a messed-up marriage!

How would you like this to be the toast at your wedding reception, "*Tonight we celebrate your marriage to each other - and we want you to enjoy your marriage now, before your new bride starts turning tricks!*"

But God always has a reason for what He does - and it's stated at the end of vs. 2:

"...for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD."

Throughout Scripture, God's relationship with Israel is often described in metaphorical language as a husband (God) and wife (Israel).

Hosea is obedient to the command of God, and they name their first son "Jezreel", to signal God's faithfulness

to a previous prophecy/promise during Elijah's ministry about 150 years earlier.

During Hosea's early years of ministry, Israel was enjoying a time of economic and national prosperity. The nation was prospering, but they had walked away from God. *"They went through the external motions of worshipping God, but they were committing all manner of sin and were in great moral and spiritual decline."* (see

2 Chron. 26 - The Minor Prophets, by Charles L Feinberg, p. 14)

Verse 5 is a prophecy of Israel's defeat and exile to the Assyrians - **2 Kings 17:5-23**.

Israel was proud - and God would break their spirit of pride and He would discipline them for centuries of spiritual adultery where they had prostituted themselves with the gods of Baal.

Hosea and Gomer's two other children were given names which would communicate God's displeasure with the nation.

Their daughter, "No mercy" - communicated God would no longer have mercy on Israel (**vs. 6**).

Their 2nd son (3rd child) was given a name which meant, "Not My People", for Israel had stopped living as God's chosen people and they were forfeiting the blessing of God.

This declaration of “Not My People” did not mean God was getting rid of Israel forever. God’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) was unconditional. In **Romans 11:1** Paul still calls Israel God’s people.

This declaration in the 3rd child’s name meant that the nation had rejected God and rebelled against His commands for so long they no longer were able to experience or realize God’s presence and blessing in their life.

Further words of judgment are recorded in **chapter 2**

(See vs. 2-3, 5, 8, 13)

Israel will now be disciplined by another nation, because they were no longer living in ways that showed they were the people of God.

But just as the words of divine judgment are spoken by God, the undying love and grace of God come forth.

God’s love and grace for His people *1:10-2:1,14-23*

All throughout the book of Hosea, you read the judgments of God on their sin, and in the next line, you read of His undying love for Israel.

Read 1:10-2:1, 14-23

You read about judgment, and then about His love and grace for them.

God's love and grace to His people is all over the Scripture...so why is it so difficult for Christians to show love and grace?

Too often we have seen the Christian community react to the sin (of fellow Christians) with judgment and rage. Unfortunately, this is the reaction many in the culture see in the Church - judgment, condemnation and ungrace, instead of the love and grace which Jesus expressed to sinners.

Illus. I recently came across the story of Maddi Runkles, a H.S. senior - 4.0 GPA - in a Christian H.S. in western Maryland. In January Maddi became pregnant. She told her parents - confessed what she had done. Her parents informed the school what had happened.

Like every other student, Maddie signed a pledge to abstain from sex, alcohol and drugs.

She violated the pledge regarding sex.

Others in the school have violated the pledge regarding alcohol and drugs.

When the school was notified, Maddie was suspended and removed from her student leadership positions.

She understood why this happened...and agreed with the school's decision - accepting the consequences of her actions.

She decided to keep the baby and not get an abortion. Other students have violated the pledge through drug or alcohol use - and were suspended like Maddi was. However, unlike the other students who have violated the pledge, the principal decided to hold a school assembly (parents invited) to inform the school of what Maddie had done, and she was also told she would not be allowed to walk at graduation.

She would receive her diploma...but she would not be able to participate in the graduation ceremony.

The school's statement read: "*Maddi is being disciplined not because she is pregnant, but because she was immoral.*"

This didn't sit well with Maddi - her parents - or many of the pro-life groups across the country, who believe this type of public shaming will lead to other girls who become pregnant to choose abortion, instead of enduring the public shaming and ostracizing that Maddi has experienced.

My question is this...since Maddi confessed her sin, why is the school adding these additional punishments to Maddi?

(In addition. some in the larger Christian community in that area have taken to social media to condemn her and belittling her with hateful and cruel comments.)

The other students who broke the pledge were allowed to walk at graduation, but since the result of Maddi's sin is visible whereas the other student's sin is not visible, does that justify the extra punishment and shame Maddi is receiving?

What if another student broke the pledge and got drunk or high, got into a car accident and became paralyzed as a result. Since that would be a visible reminder of their sin, would the school say they couldn't take part in the graduation ceremony?

Illus. Another article I came across is written by a young woman who grew up in a Christian home and her father was a pastor. However, she made the same mistake as Maddi and became pregnant in her early 20's before she was married. She hid her pregnancy for 5 months, and like Maddi, she considered abortion but knew that would pile sin upon sin - never a good combination.

She writes, "The day I finally mustered up the strength and courage and confided in my father, something extraordinary happened. My father's shoulders sagged and he hung his head. Momentarily we sat in silence, me holding my breath awaiting his reaction while wearing the weight of his certain disappointment and possible anger. Then there was

the indescribable and overwhelming feeling of shame that washed over me in waves.

My father finally raised his head and looked at me with tears in his eyes. “Honey,” he said, “I am so disappointed. I am.”

Now it was my turn to hang my head.

He continued... “And you have made poor choices which now have consequences. It won’t be easy -- and there will be struggles and a hard path ahead of you. but I love you - and now I figure I have been given more to love.”

Before I could respond my father got up from his chair and reached over and wrapped me in his arms and simply held me.

It was just what I needed and not anything I expected.

She continues...

What I encountered was something I had never fully grasped before though I had been taught for years.

Grace.

I didn’t get what I deserved, but I certainly fully received what I had been taught.

Grace swept over me and unleashed its power connecting both my head and my heart.

That grace moment propelled my life in a new direction.

I confessed my sins, I cleaned up my act, and I charted a new course fanned by the winds of grace and truth spoken in love.

(Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/08/26/was-unwed-teen-and-had-to-tell-my-pastor-father-what-happened-next-was-incredible-shock.html>)

God proclaimed His love and grace for His people - even though they were far from Him and far from obeying Him.

Grace is messy...

Grace is uncomfortable...

Grace leaves many of the chairs scattered all over the deck...it doesn't clean up the mess of sin.

But grace gives life...and it gives love.

Hosea gives grace to Gomer 3:1-5

Reconciliation is a wonderful thing.

Over the years, I have worked with many couples who were struggling in their marriage. Some had experienced adultery, others had patterns of dysfunction which caused tremendous pain.

One of the keys to reconciling a husband and wife is regaining trust.

There must be confession and repentance - and then forgiveness, before trust can begin to be rebuilt in the relationship.

There must be a change of behavior - a commitment to faithfulness and healthy patterns in life before the marriage can be saved.

Grace does not require correct behavior.

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Grace appeals to correct behavior...grace motivates correct behavior, but it does not require it.

To require it would cause it to be something other than grace.

If correct behavior is required, then something is being earned - something is deserved.

But grace does not require correct behavior.

Look at the text: *Read 3:1-5 - with comments*

Hosea got his wife back - brought her back into his life - before she confessed her sins and straightened out her life.

This is not a model for marriage...it's a picture of God's grace and love toward sinners.

As Jesus told the woman caught in adultery in John 8,

“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”,

Hosea does not condemn Gomer, but tells her to sin no more - she doesn't belong to another man - he is her husband.

Vs. 4-5 look to the future and prophecy about Israel being reconciled to God “in the latter days”.

The grace of God - demonstrated through Hosea to his harlot wife Gomer, leaves a mess.

Gomer has been redeemed...Gomer had been brought close so she can be loved...but their life is not comfortable.

This is the grace of God - from God's perspective.

If you are a Christian and come to church because it gives you a template to keep life in order - to keep righteousness close and sin at a distance...then your version of Christianity does not include grace.

Apply it...

God's love for you is unconditional. (Rom. 8:31-39)

There is nothing you can do...or not do...which will cause God to stop loving you.

God's grace for you is abundant and unending. (Eph. 1:7-8)

He is not stingy with His grace toward you.

His grace is greater than your sin - and greater than your obedience.

Grace is a bit messy (John 8:11)

God's grace gives you what you don't deserve...but it doesn't clean up the mess.

The cleaning crew comes in after grace has made its appearance!

Close in prayer