

# The Objects of God's Unconditional Love

## (Part 2)

### *Living Two Lives*

**A**s we continue in Hosea we see that those who departed from the Lord had a kind of false, superficial life-style. Their condition expressed itself in this way. In Hosea 2:11 the Lord says, "I will also cause all her mirth to cease." "Mirth" here refers to a kind of superficial silliness. Then verses 11-13 continue, <sup>11</sup> "... her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths — all her appointed feasts. <sup>12</sup> And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, 'These are my rewards that my lovers have given me.' So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. <sup>13</sup> I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers. Then she forgot Me, says the Lord." This describes a kind of life-style that has a double standard. In one breath, she was keeping all the appointed feasts and celebrating the New Moons and Sabbaths. Apparently, she was quite spiri-

tual. But then, in the next breath, she had departed from the Lord and was living in an idolatrous and ungodly way.

In her life there was a double standard, not a single standard. In like manner, we may profess to be a Christian, a church-attending believer. But we have one standard for being around people in that setting, and another standard in our personal life. We are living a dual life-style. Today all that is publicized in the media concerning the Christian world exposes that not all the servants of the Lord on this earth live with a single standard. But it is so touching that through the years some have kept themselves from duality. They continue to have a single standard, and when you read about their life you discover that what they are in public — "on the platform" so to speak — is what they are in their home. In other words, they are not living two lives.

But suppose you are a person with a kind of false life-style, living two lives. One life is coming to the meetings of the church and doing all the outward things; but separate from that is your other life, in which you are going after your "lovers."

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Humanly speaking, we all know that this is despicable. But, if that is where you are right now, God is stooping to meet you there and to love you back to Himself. Yes, His love comes to this condition.

So we can see that the love of God is incredible. To us it seems too good to be true. You thought you were “beyond the point of no return” because you have been practicing a double standard for five years now. You would never outwardly give up the Lord, but inwardly you have gone after other lovers. However, the Lord will just take you out of Egypt (the world) and bring you into the wilderness for a time. There He will put you in a situation where He can allure you and start talking to your heart. He will begin to single your heart to love just Him and to live Him. He does all this by securing your cooperation. This is how He works — “with the grain,” as we say, and not against it. The guarantee of the New Covenant is this: <sup>26</sup> “I [the Lord] will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezek. 36:26-27a). He will do it by His Spirit. Praise the Lord. This is His way of coming to you and loving you in your kind of condition.

### *Loving Substitutes*

One of the key verses in understanding the nature of the book of Hosea is chapter 3, verse 1: “Then the Lord said to me, Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover [her husband] and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.” Here is a condition that could be described as loving substitutes for God: loving “the raisin cakes *of the pagans.*” Brothers and sisters, do you realize that we are living in a pagan society? Paganism and godlessness is all around us and is seeking to

infiltrate our lives every single day through the radio, through the television, through the newspapers, through professors, through the concepts, views, and values of other people, and their lifestyles. In other words, through all of this the devil is trying to cause us to conform to the world’s values, the world’s styles, and the world’s ways. Here in Hosea, God’s people are loving the raisin cakes of the pagans, the things that belong to the pagans; and yet they are His people. Perhaps the source of our values is not so much the Word of God, but television shows or some other form of entertainment. Do you realize that you are constantly forming your values based upon what you take in — what you watch, what you read and hear? For example, you may be relating to your husband or wife according to what you have learned from the pagans, and not according to the Word of God.

So here we are with our views, our thoughts, and our values. Where did we learn these things? From God? Were we taught by the Spirit? Does the Lord allow what we do, or does our generation allow it? This touches all of us. But even if your whole value system is filled with pagan ideas and views, and not what God values, His love still comes to you in this condition. When we have substituted other things for the Lord, and those things have become the objects of our love, even then the Lord comes to draw us to Himself.

### *Periods of Utter Void*

As the Lord is drawing us away from substitutes and back to Himself, we may experience periods of utter void. Hosea 3:3 says, “And I said to her, You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; thus I will also be toward you.” Then the Lord interprets what this means for His people: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim” (v. 4). Verse 3 refers to a time

when the wife was taken away from her lovers and when she also did not have the intimacy of her husband. The Lord was taking her through a period in which she had no more lovers, no more things to satisfy the sensual pleasures of the flesh. She could not fulfill her lust anymore; she could not have that kind of life-style anymore. And neither could she have a full intimate love-relationship with her husband. She was just existing there, utterly void.

While you are in this condition of utter void, the Lord is right there loving you. He says, “I will also be toward you.” He will love you, but He is not going to manifest so much of His love to your feelings right now. In a sense, He is behind the curtains, but still toward you, still loving you. He is unseen, but loving you. But here you are in a period of a kind of backlash in which you cannot fulfill your lust over here, and you do not have full satisfaction over there. So you are experiencing frustration and utter void. This often happens when you have plunged into the flesh, plunged into sin — you get the backlash of it. That is, you just feel empty, disgusted, and utterly void. You have no feeling, no real enjoyment, but just a barrage of condemning thoughts. But while you are in that condition, the Lord is right there saying, “I will be toward you. I am loving you in this. My love has not diminished toward you, but I have not yet manifested it in your being.”

During this kind of period, the Lord operates in our being, just as He did in the prodigal son in Luke 15. This young man had left home and plunged himself into riotous living. He spent all his inheritance while fulfilling the lusts of his flesh. Then, being “in want” he took a job feeding swine. So, he had gone from extravagant, wasteful living to a life of poverty and hunger. All the glamour had dissipated. Sin always has this effect — it dissipates. Hebrews 11:25 speaks of enjoying “the pleasures of sin for a season” (KJV). Some versions translate this phrase, “the *passing* pleasures of sin.” The pleasure is only for a season. Finally, in his

dissipated condition, the prodigal son “came to himself.” While he was in a period of utter void and emptiness, he realized that it was really better with his father, at home. Then he said to himself, “I will arise and go to my father.” So he set out for home, with a rehearsed confession and proposal to his father. He was feeling his unworthiness as a son and the utter void of having nothing to show for his time away in sin. In this condemned state of feeling like the worst kind of son, he came to his father.

But the father saw him while he was “still a great way off.” Now, notice the father’s style of loving in verse 20. He did not wait until his son arrived at the doorstep. But upon seeing him, he “had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” Then he clothed him with the best robe, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and prepared the fatted calf to celebrate his home-coming. That is the style of God’s love. When you and I can barely say, “I love You, Lord” — when we do not have that much feeling — but we just go to a church meeting, God in His love runs to meet us, lavishing His love upon us. This is His love to us in our periods of utter void. He is there as He promised: “I will be toward you.” He is still loving, still toward us in this period.

### *Breaking All Restraint*

Let us now look at Hosea 4:2 and consider another aspect of a backslidden condition — breaking all restraint. Verse 2 describes this condition: “By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed.” With this condition, there are no restraints. One sin is added to another sin. All this makes us realize what a wonderful thing it is that we human beings have a conscience. Even ungodly people, unbelieving people, have a conscience; and many unbelievers do live by their

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# S a v e d

according to

## God's Purpose

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to **the purpose**. Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He should be the Firstborn among many brothers; and whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also **glorified** (Rom. 8:28-30, emphasis added).*

*And one of the seven angels . . . came and spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God (Rev. 21:9-11).*

*And God said, Let us make man in our image (Gen. 1:26).*

### Man's Fall from God's Purpose

**B**y reading Romans 8:28-30 it is clear that in eternity past God predestinated us, according to His purpose, to be conformed to His image. It is also clear from Revelation 21 and 22 that in eternity future God secures what He purposed to obtain — man in His glorious image. Therefore, because God's purpose spans both ends of eternity, it is called in the Bible an *eternal* purpose (Eph. 3:11). This implies that all of time, which exists between the two ends of eternity, has been allotted by God for the working out of His purpose. Furthermore, this implies that all of creation, which was God's first act during the period called time, is existing for His purpose. Indeed, the creation is simply the setting for God's purpose to be accomplished. And finally, it is clear from Genesis 1:26, man was created as the specific vessel for the fulfillment of God's purpose, which is to bear His glorious image.

However, the Bible records that soon after he was created, man chose to disobey God, to rebel and live independently from God. Man chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and as a result he became sinful and corrupt. Both inwardly and outwardly he degraded to an exceedingly evil condition (Gen. 6:5; Rom. 1:21-32; 3:10-18). This has been termed by believers as "the fall of man." But we must realize that the fall of man involves not only falling into sin but also falling away from God's purpose. That is, the fall of man was not only the point where sin came in, but perhaps more seriously, the fall was the point where man departed from the divine purpose for which he was created!

This is why throughout human history, and even today, man in his fallen state experiences an inward gnawing, an inward unrest which wonders, What am I doing here? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is the meaning of my existence? There is an inward gnawing in every man which longs to know, What is the meaning of my life? Is it merely to go to work, come home, eat dinner, watch T.V., and go to bed; to go to work, come home, eat dinner, watch T.V., and go to bed? Is it merely to get married, have children, buy a car, then two cars, buy a house, then a summer house, accumulate a large pension, retire early and vacation in Hawaii or Florida — and then die? Is this the meaning of our existence? There is an inward gnawing and questioning in every man which demands to know if there is more purpose to life than this.

Why do we as men experience such a gnawing within? Because we are creatures of purpose. God created us for a specific purpose, and we, having fallen from that purpose, experience an innate activity of inward unrest. We seek to know the meaning of life. Whether we admit it or not, whether we make claims of happiness and satisfaction or not, this inward gnawing exists in every man.

### Saved according to His Purpose

Fortunately, even though man fell, God did not abandon His purpose with him. He could have forsaken

His plan, especially since the vessel through which He was to express Himself was damaged and corrupted by sin. But, praise Him, God did not forsake man but in His wisdom took steps to save and recover him. God sent somebody. Actually, He did not send somebody; He came Himself. Let us look at 2 Timothy 1:9-10:

*[God] Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who nullified death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel.*

These verses tell us that approximately two thousand years ago there was an appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus. God Himself became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect, sinless, uplifted human life for thirty-three years. He then went to the cross, shed His blood, and died. After three days He rose from the dead, and He ascended in glory to the Father's right hand.

Why did God go through such a long and involved process? Many of us realize that through Christ's death, He accomplished redemption and the forgiveness of sins. His shed blood has alleviated the problem of sins and of man's evil state before God. This is marvelous. Yet we must see that in the Bible even redemption is not the primary reason why Jesus Christ came to be our Savior. Second Timothy 1:9 reveals that His salvation is according to *His own purpose*. This means that His salvation, which was accomplished through His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, was carried out with His eternal purpose in view. He has saved us according to His purpose! Although Christ's redemption is a crucial step in God's salvation, we must realize it was accomplished simply to bring fallen man back up to the purpose for which he was originally created. Christ did not come only to forgive our sins. Rather, He forgave our sins in order that we might be restored as vessels fit for God's eternal purpose. And as we have seen, God's purpose is to have man expressing His image. Therefore, God has forgiven our

sins and saved us, but not as an end in itself. He has saved us according to His own purpose.

Practically speaking, how are we saved according to God's purpose? That is, how are we saved to the extent that we bear God's glorious image? To answer this question we must first realize that we are not saved according to our works, as Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 1:9. Our works have nothing to do with God's salvation.

In our initial experience of salvation we obtain the forgiveness of sins, justification before God, and reconciliation to God — not by our good merit, but by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way, God's complete salvation, which has as its ultimate goal our conformation to His image, is not accomplished by our works. Our efforts to bear God's image are futile. Our attempts to imitate God or walk in the footsteps of Christ are in vain. We must realize that it is absolutely impossible for humans to express the glorious image of God by their own efforts and imitation! We in ourselves cannot fulfill God's purpose.

Let us use an illustration. We have all seen chimpanzees who have been trained to behave like men. These chimps are trained to clothe themselves like men, sit like men, eat like men, etc. Yet once the incentive of reward is removed or the supervision of their master is gone, they spontaneously return to their natural state of behaving like an ape — running, jumping, swinging, climbing. Of course, they cannot help it. Why? Because they have the *life* of an ape, not of a man. Yes, they can *imitate* humans for a brief time. But it is surely not the genuine expression of a man. What is missing is the human life which spontaneously and effortlessly does human things.

Similarly, we as humans often try to imitate God as a chimp imitates a man. For example, many of us have had the experience of studying the Bible and discovering that God is loving, holy, righteous, victorious, patient, and humble. And we, desiring to be well-pleasing to God, set out to be just like Him. We too want to be loving, holy, righteous, victorious, patient, and humble. We do our best to imitate God, trying to bear His image. However, we find that our imitation is quite poor and short-

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conscience the best they know how. Our conscience is precious because it is a restraining influence on man's flesh breaking out in violence and immorality. Of course, the law enforcement agencies in our country also act as a restraining influence upon man's sinful, rebellious flesh.

Here in Hosea 4:2 God's people broke all restraint. They were lying, killing, and committing adultery. Because there was no restraint, there was bloodshed upon bloodshed. This was their condition. They had silenced their conscience, not wanting to listen to it anymore. They broke all inward restraint. This describes what has happened morally to this country. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul uses several different words to describe the breaking of all restraint. In Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 4:19; 5:3, and Colossians 3:5 he uses the words uncleanness, fornication, and unbridled greedy lust. Then he also uses the word sensuality, which best describes the breaking of all moral restraints. It denotes doing things openly, even condoning what God hates. Together these words describe what happened in Hosea with God's people. They broke all restraints.

Perhaps you feel that way about yourself — that you have added one sin upon another. You have broken restraint, you have silenced your conscience. In these periods the devil does a lot of talking in your mind; and in his talking he draws the conclusion that once and for all you are reprobate. He tells you that you are past any hope because you have broken the restraint. But again, God's love comes into this kind of situation. He says of His people, "I will allure her, I will heal her backsliding. I will love her freely." What can He do with Ephraim? Can He give her up? Can He hand her over? No, He cannot do that. He can only love her.

This is the unconditional love of God toward the objects of His love. He loves us in a personal way. He said, "Jacob have I loved." So He loves you by name. He loves me by name. Regardless of our failure, of our being a mass of corruption —

regardless of all these things — we are the objects of His love.

### *Rejecting Light*

Finally, let us look at the matter of rejecting light, another aspect of a backslidden condition. Hosea 4:6a says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge . . ." God's people rejected knowledge, they rejected the Word, they rejected light. Many times in the church life we have talked about God's light coming, and our walking in the light while we have the light. Yet much of the time we have not walked in the light while we had it. Instead, we rejected the light. Yes, God did speak to us. Now those lingering failures in our experience become the raw material the devil uses to categorize and accuse us. He will use lingering defeats, injecting related thoughts of what we passed through to taunt us and eventually categorize us.

The Greek word for "accuser" is κατηγορος. The English word category comes from this, indicating that the nature of the devil's work is to put us into a category. He will say to you, "You are just this kind of person. You will never be any different. This is the way you have always been and this is the way you will continue to be." Then you begin looking at yourself according to how he is categorizing you. Eventually you say, "This is the way I am. I might as well give up." Many suicides today are simply due to the devil succeeding in convincing people's minds that there is no hope for them because they have rejected God at some point. But in Hosea, God's love comes to His people who have rejected knowledge, who have rejected light. God spoke through the Old Testament prophets, again and again revealing His love. He came to these people to woo and to love and to do whatever He could to secure the mutual love He desired. And one day He will obtain His heart's desire — that reciprocal love from His people.

*Nothing Separating Us  
from the Love of God*

Hosea 2:23 says, “Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth [this is the positive meaning of the name Jezreel], and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, You are My people! And they shall say, You are my God!” This is what the love of God does to us fallen, corrupt, rebellious, light-rejecting people. He comes to us, secures our heart, and then says, “You are My people.”

In 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul says to the believers, “And such were some of you.” Some of us were drunkards, homosexuals, fornicators, covetous, extortioners. Yet Paul continues, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” So God has taken each of us who were a “mass of corruption” and made us the objects of His love. He has wooed us and won us, and now we say, “You are my God.” Hallelujah! This is the church. The reality of the church is a group of people enjoying this love.

May the Holy Spirit take these words and expand our revelation of the nature of God’s love toward us, so that we could never escape it. Under this revelation, we can say with Paul, “*in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” — *in tribulation, in distress, in persecution, in famine, in nakedness, in peril, in sword* (Rom. 8:37, 35). This unconditional love of God persuades us that nothing, no nothing, can separate us from God coming to us, drawing us, wooing us, and winning these hearts of ours from whatever has held them captive. We are secure in this love, so we can go on enjoying this love. Then God’s purpose is accomplished — He obtains a group of people who overcome the accuser of the brethren by the blood of the Lamb. That blood is a great testimony in the whole heavenly realm, that there was a day in this universe when God demon-

strated His love. He proved it by shedding His own blood for sinners. While we were sinners, Christ died for us.

One day we are all going to be transferred to another realm to have another meeting. We are meeting here, and we will be meeting again in resurrection. We are going to meet with all the saints, and for eternity we are all going to shout, “It’s the blood! It’s the blood!” This is the love of God coming through the blood of Jesus, washing and cleansing us sinners to be right with Him and to enjoy Him. And He will say, “You are My people,” and we will say, “You are our God.” Amen. O hallelujah!\*

— Bill Freeman

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\* The above article, “The Objects of God’s Unconditional Love,” is part 2 of the second chapter of a new book entitled *God’s Unconditional Love*, by Bill Freeman. The book is available for \$5.00, postpaid. You may order by writing to **Ministry Publications**, P.O. 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267, or calling (602) 948-4050.

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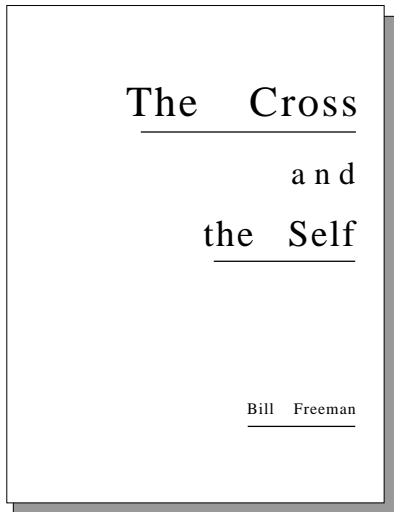
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lived. It seems that our efforts are not so spontaneous, but are forced and burdensome and inevitably end up in failure. Why? Because we only possess the life of a man, not of God. We are attempting to express God without the life of God Himself. This is utterly impossible.

Hence, our unique need is to inwardly possess the life of God. It is only by possessing His life that we could be His genuine expression and thus fulfill God’s eternal purpose. This is why in 2 Timothy 1:9-10 Paul says that our Savior, Christ Jesus, brought *life* to light through the gospel. How are we saved according to God’s eternal purpose? It is not by our works but by the divine life which our Savior brought to us in His grace. Only by possessing and experiencing His divine life can we humans express His divine image.

— Kirk Eland

# New Book Review



*The Cross and the Self* is comprised of a number of messages given by Bill Freeman on the experience of the cross in dealing with the self-life. These messages were given in Seattle, Washington, in 1985.

From the Word of God, particularly from the Old Testament book of Job, light is shed on the hidden self. It is this hidden self that frustrates both our personal growth in the Lord and the corporate building of the church. Thus, the emphasis in *The Cross and the Self* is on the inward application of the cross in the realm of the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). By this inward experience of the cross, the source of our living is increasingly transferred from soul to spirit.

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