

## Responding to God's Unfailing Love

**Opening text: Hosea 6:4, 6 (NLT)** - 4 *"O Israel and Judah, what should I do with you?" asks the Lord. "For your love vanishes like the morning mist and disappears like dew in the sunlight. [...] 6 I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings. 7 But like Adam, you broke my covenant and betrayed my trust.*

We need to hear the heart of God in this text. God is being absolutely transparent about how He feels about the way we sometimes love Him.

As I said, last week, do you realise that God took a risk in loving us? There is risk involved in loving someone. You see, love must be chosen, and a choice means that a person can say 'no'. Yet, God still took that risk, and He loves us!

His love never fails, never weakens, never loses fire - but it is obvious from these words in Hosea (and of those of Jesus in Revelation 2:1-5) that we often fall short of that standard: we don't love God like he deserves to be loved. Our love can fluctuate or even simply be lost. We are inconsistent in our affections for Him.

This is such an interesting text because it shows us 3 things:

1. That although God's love is without conditions, his love is not without expectation.
2. That God is worthy of all our love, commitment, and loyalty.
3. Lastly, we see here how God truly feels. We have a glimpse into His heart toward us.

### **1. Although God's love is without conditions, it is not without expectations.**

*"O Israel and Judah, what should I do with you?" asks the Lord. "For your love vanishes like the morning mist and disappears like dew in the sunlight"*

- a) The implication of this statement is that God expected a love that had substance, a love that would endure - not a love that was shallow, superficial, and short-lived.

In fact, the word "love" here, in the Hebrew language is the word "hesed". That word was translated in different Bible versions as *faithfulness, commitment, or loyalty*.

The **AMP Bible** puts it this way: – ... *"your wavering loyalty and kindness are transient"*.

- b) Although God's love is without conditions, it is not without expectation!

**V.6** - *I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.*

**Psalms 51:16-17** - *For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; you do not delight in burnt offering. <sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— these, O God, You will not despise.*

**Joel 2:13** - *So, rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness;*

- c) God has two very clear expectations when it comes to our relationship with Him. He said:
- *I want you to show love* (not religious works empty of meaning, but love - God wants intimacy). The word love in Hebrew also means loyal, covenant love.
  - *I want you to know me*

**Hosea 6:3a** - *Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.*

**Job 22:21**: *“Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. **26-28** - For then you will have your **delight** in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. <sup>27</sup>You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you, and you will pay your vows. <sup>28</sup>You will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you; so, light will shine on your ways.*

- d) *“<sup>4</sup>O Israel and Judah, what should I do with you?”*

This rhetorical question is here to help Judah and Israel to re-think the true nature of their relationship with God. It clearly shows that God has expectations.

**Isaiah 5:3-4** - *“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. <sup>4</sup>What more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? why then, when I **expected** it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?”*

## **2. God is worthy of all our love, commitment, and loyalty.**

God has done so much for us: He loved us first; He loved us when we were still sinners. As Isaiah 5:4 points out, what more could God have done for us that He hasn't?

**Romans 8:32** says that God who did not spare His own Son, how shall He not also with Him, freely give us all things! God invested everything! And He is willing to freely give us all things. WOW! Is He not worthy that we love Him eternally, wholeheartedly, and passionately, with a deeply committed love?

## **3. The heart of God**

The third thing we see in this text is the heart of God – how God truly feels when such love is met with indifference and a commitment that is at best shallow and short-lived.

<sup>4</sup>*“O Israel and Judah, what should I do with you?” asks the Lord. “For your love vanishes like the morning mist and disappears like dew in the sunlight.*

- a) The Bible does not reveal God as a Someone void of emotion, detached from all human activity, distant from our lives and indifferent towards us. No. There are at least 7 specific emotions attributed to God in the Bible.

We don't have time to cover that topic today but let us just say that He is easily touched by the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:5), He is compassionate and kind, He can laugh but He can also be grieved. For instance Psalms 78:40 says that the Father can be grieved, Ephesians 4:30 says, '*don't grieve the Holy Spirit*' and John 11:35 shows the grief of Jesus for His friend Lazarus. God has feelings. Jesus wept. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem:

**Matthew 23:37** - *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*

- b) The heart of God is broken for those who say 'no' or those who once said 'yes' but soon forgot His love and have backslidden. His heart is broken for those whose commitment to His love is limited, conditional or shallow.

*<sup>6</sup>I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings. <sup>7</sup>But like Adam, you broke my covenant and betrayed my trust.*

There are three things God clearly values in our relationship with Him:

- Love (*hesed* – loyal covenant love)
- Intimacy
- Loyalty (v.7) – Betrayal is probably the hardest of things to deal with and to come back from. Betrayal is the original sin of Adam.

God knows all about betrayal: the devil betrayed God and a third of his angels. The same devil entered Judas who betrayed Jesus. The spirit of betrayal is a demonic spirit. However, God values covenant love, commitment, loyalty!

These values are uncommon in the world today but let it be said of you and me that we are loyal to Jesus, in covenant with one another, faithful in our relationships and committed to loving God like He deserves to be loved.

**Let us love the Lord not with a superficial love, not with lip service, not in a way that is shallow and fake but with a love that is constant, one that never never fails and a passion that is real and that stands - regardless of tests, trials, joys or tears.**