

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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The Door of Hope

By Randy Harshbarger

"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope..." (Hosea 2:5). The story of Hosea is a sad one. It is a story of sin and apostasy. Hosea, the prophet of God, married a woman by the name of Gomer. In doing so, Hosea was obeying a commandment of the Lord. They had two sons and a daughter. Their names were special and provided lessons for the people of God. They were children of whoredom and Gomer was a daughter of the age. She had been influenced by the idolatry and immorality around her. It is out of this beginning that a story so shocking and horrifying was told by Hosea.

Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. While sad, that story was not uncommon in an age of adultery and fornication. The Lord told Hosea to take Gomer back; in doing so, he paid 15

pieces of silver for her. This was half-price for a slave. Hosea in effect, rescued Gomer from the auction block. Through this experience with Gomer, Hosea learned a lesson about God and His love for the apostate children of Israel. Through his own tear dimmed eyes, and with a broken heart, Hosea could then call Israel back from sin and ruin.

God suffers when His people are unfaithful. God does not delight in those who die in sin. All of earth's sorrows are upon the heart of God. Jesus Christ understands when we hurt **(Hebrews 4:14-16)**. Since God is love **(1 John 4:7-8, 16)**, He suffers when His "loved ones" suffer. God has chosen to love man and, when we sin, His heart is broken. Jesus wept for the people of Jerusalem **(Matthew 23:28)**. Sin brings agony to the heart of God. He suffered because of what sin does to us.

Sin also defeats the purpose of God's love. Sin spoils, stains, and blinds man as

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he turns from God. If God could deal lightly with sin, He would not be God. To sin is to turn from what God desires of us as His children. When we sin, we must repent. To refuse is to say in effect that we do not care about God's efforts to save us.

God loves the sinner in spite of the sinner's sin. God hates sin, but it is in love that He appeals to each one. Thank God for His loving kindness. In spite of Israel's sin, God still loved her.

The Lord wants us to be restored to Him. The ninety and nine are safe, but where is the one who is lost? God makes no compromise with sin. He longs for the sinner's return. God so loved to make it possible for one to be free of sin and as its condemning consequences. How hard it must have been for Hosea to take Gomer back. God loves us, but hates our sin!

Sin has no door of hope. Only the Lord can provide the way of salvation. Will we take it?

Can We Have Too Much "Positive" Preaching?

By Greg Gwin

We readily acknowledge the importance of positive preaching. Brethren need the "comfort of the Scriptures" **(Romans 15:4)**. Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians so that he could "comfort your hearts." Timothy was dispatched to Philippi **(Phil. 2:9)** and Thessalonica **(1 Thess. 3:2)** in order to comfort the brethren. Clearly, this kind of positive encouragement is essential. The Bible has much to say about it. No one denies this.

There are, however, some among us who are determined to only preach positive things. They want to specialize in positive preaching and to emphasize only those things which (they claim) are designed to "build up" the hearers. They will not deal with controversial topics, and they refuse to spend time rebuking the sins and weaknesses that exist in men's lives.

This "positive" approach fails to present the whole counsel of God **(Acts 20:27)**, and at least two serious consequences will follow:

1) Christians will not be admonished to root out the evil that is in their lives. We must "put off the old man"

(Colossians 3:9). We will never become the “new man” that we ought to be (vs. 10) until we have been instructed adequately in this regard.

2) Christians will become conditioned to only want this sort of teaching and preaching. After having a steady diet of positive emphasis, brethren will lose all tolerance for forceful preaching on important doctrinal and moral issues. The apostle Paul anticipated such a scenerio: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3).

We are not at liberty to be “specialists” in only one aspect of the work. If we emphasize the positive while neglecting the negative, we have not done “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Our job involves both the positive and the negative. We are to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort” (vs. 2).

Orphans of the Living

By Edgar A. Guest

We think of orphans only as little girls and lads,

Who haven't any mothers and who haven't any dads. They are grouped with other children and in groups they're put to bed

With some stranger paid to listen while their little prayers are said.

All the grown-ups look with pity on such lonely children small And declare to be an orphan is the saddest fate of all. But sometime I look about me and with sorrow hang my head As I gaze on something sadder than the orphans of the dead.

Far more pitiful and tragic as the long days come and go Are the orphans of the parents they're not allowed to know. They're orphans of the living, left alone to romp and play. From their fathers and their mothers by ambition shut away.

They have fathers who are busy and so weighted down with cares That they haven't time to listen to a little child's affairs. They have mothers who imagine life could give them, if it would, Something richer, something better than the joys of motherhood.

So their children learn from strangers, and by stranger's hands are fed,

And the nurse, for so much money, nightly tucks them into bed.

Lord, I would not grow so busy that I cannot drop my task To answer every question which that child of mine may ask.

Let me never serve ambition here so selfishly, I pray, That I cannot stop to listen to the things my children have to say. For whatever cares beset them, let them know I'm standing by. I don't want to make them orphans till the day I come to die

Invite Night - Tonight!

What a great opportunity to invite your family – friends – neighbors to come to our services tonight. We will be addressing how we can **“Overcome The Mountains Of Life”**

Many times in our lives we find ourselves climbing mountains for different reasons.

These are not the physical mountains that many train to climb. These are the mountains that pop up before us during our journey down this life's pathway. Whether it is discouragement – financial – health – death - family – unemployment – spiritual – or other reasons these mountains can be very difficult to climb.

Call someone today and invite them to attend with you!