

AND LOVE YOU FREELY

February 2010

Brenda Cobb Murphy - brenda@brendacobbmurphy.com

I will heal their waywardness and love them freely ...

(Hosea 14:4)

This morning as I read this verse it moved me to tears. It's not "and love them freely, BUT ..." It has nothing to do with what I do or how I act, it's not about whether I'm good enough or have earned His love through my performance. God just loves me. Period.

Other than air, there isn't much that's free. I mean totally free, no strings attached. Even water isn't free, unless you find it on a piece of land that no one owns, or catch your own rainwater.

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely." God said that out of a broken heart, allegorically to a prostitute, in reality to Israel when she had left Him for other lovers. Freely, that's the most basic, truest form of love. **He's saying, "There is nothing you can do or say that will stop me from loving you."**

John tells us that God doesn't just love us, but He IS love.¹

What is the point of love if there is no object to receive that love? The very word denotes both a lover and a recipient of love.

*We complete God's love. We're told, **But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him.** Again the Bible tells us, **No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.***²

The emphasis that God puts in the Bible on the fact that He IS love, on His love for us, and on His desire for our love, shows us that He is emotionally involved, both corporately and individually, in mankind. So emotionally involved, in fact, that when we ruined His plan he not only sacrificed His Son to redeem us but He allows a part of His Godhead to dwell within us in order for us to have the capability of loving Him the way He so desperately wants. This intense love causes Him to give us

His mind, to adopt us as sons alongside His real Son, to provide us with His inheritance, and to seek each one of us out to walk intimately with Him. His love moves Him to jealousy, provokes Him to anger, and causes Him to literally beg us to love Him. It has Him rejoicing over us with singing one minute and weeping brokenheartedly the next. He cries over us the way a mother's heart breaks over her children, and loves us in a way that only Love Himself can. Moreover, He feels a great loss when we don't respond to His love.³

God pursued us, performing the greatest act of love that exists. He didn't do it just out of charity, or feeling sorry for us, or because having created us it was His duty. **He felt so emotionally in love with us that He chose to do it because we were worth it.** Love needed us to complete Love. Over and over the Bible refers to a union between God and us, and the nature of a union is that two are united into one.⁴

Marriage, the greatest expression of love on earth, was created by God to represent the relationship He wants with us as His bride.⁵

While God is wholly God without us, there is a place we fill in Him that nothing else can. When it comes to God loving man, chapter sixteen in Ezekiel and the second chapter of Hosea are two of the most heartbreaking chapters of the Bible, as a broken-hearted God cries out for us. I cannot read the verses below and not believe that there is a place in God that needs our love. Otherwise, we would not have the ability to cause Him such deep, heart-rending pain.

"And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols."⁶

"You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband!"⁷

"How can I give you up ... My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused."⁸

"You also took the fine jewelry I gave you, the jewelry made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them. And you took your embroidered clothes to put on them, and you offered my oil and incense before them. Also the food I provided for you-- the fine flour, olive oil and

honey I gave you to eat-- you offered as fragrant incense before them. That is what happened, declares the Sovereign LORD."⁹

"... she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot," declares the LORD."¹⁰

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"*¹¹

What a love story! It is so grand, so noble, and so true. It is so beautiful, good-hearted, and strong, withstanding every attempt by satan to destroy it. Through the ages God continues to woo us back to Him. And this fairy-tale *does* end with happily-ever-after. We *will* stand by our King and speak our marriage vows to each other. **He will be wholly loved and we will be wholly loved.**

It is unfair to judge the God of love by the humans who represent Him. If I had sat down and made up the perfect god I couldn't have come up with one as wonderful as the real One. We yearn for the happily-ever-after fairy tale because we were created to live it. And to live it being loved by the greatest Lover of all!

¹ *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.* I John 4:8; *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.* I John 4:16

² We complete God's love: I John 2:5; I John 4:12

³ He allows a part of His Godhead to dwell within us (Acts 2:38,28), to give us His mind (I Co. 2:16), to adopt us as sons (Romans 8:15,16; Ephesians 2:6), to provide us with His inheritance (Ephesians 1:13,14), and to seek each one of us out to walk in a personal relationship with Him (John 15:15). His love moves Him to jealousy (II Co. 11:2), provokes Him to anger (Mark 3:5), and causes Him to literally beg us to come back from our waywardness and love Him (Luke 13:34). It has Him rejoicing over us with singing one minute (Zephaniah 3:17) and weeping brokenheartedly the next (Luke 19:41). He cries over us the way a mother's heart breaks over her children (Luke 13:34).

⁴ God pursued us: I John 4:10; The greatest act of love: John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

⁵ We are His bride: *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"* (Matt 19:4-6)

But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit. (1 Co. 6:17)

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. (John 15:4-27)

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:23)

(See also Ephesians 5:31,32; I Corinthians 6:17; and II Corinthians 11:2)

⁶ Ezekiel 16:20,21

⁷ Ezekiel 16:32

⁸ Hosea 11:8

⁹ Ezekiel 16:17-19

¹⁰ Hosea 2:13

¹¹ Luke 13:34