Reconciled *to the* Father

Daily Devotions for Lent and Easter

KEVIN S. GOLDEN

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ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE DAYS FOLLOWING

The Lord Who Woos

Read Hosea 2:14–20

Therefore, behold, I will allure her . . .
and speak tenderly to her.
(Hosea 2:14)

For many, the penitential days of Lent include a fast, forgoing a permissible pleasure (dessert, perhaps) to help focus our contemplation of Christ's suffering for our salvation. Such a fast is a purposeful running away from something. If I learn to run away from something that is not inherently sinful (such as dessert), then I am teaching myself to run away from what is inherently sinful. That is a lesson that each of us needs to learn because our sinful nature drives us to do the opposite—to run after sinful desires and away from Christ and His gifts.

But Christ doesn't run away from us. He does the opposite—He runs after us. He chooses to allure or woo His wayward people. Since our sinful ways have us running toward death, Christ not only runs after us but even outruns us to death as He takes our sin and replaces it with His alluring, wooing love. His death woos us away from sin and death to Him and His eternal life.

Lord Jesus Christ, turn our hearts back to You. As You woo Your church by Your suffering, death, and resurrection, grant us the Spirit to receive Your sacrificial love in faith; for You live and reign with the Father and the Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Logic Trumped by Grace

Read Hosea 2:5–7

> *Therefore*, behold, I will allure her . . .
> and speak tenderly to her.
> (Hosea 2:14, emphasis added)

Newton's third law of motion applies beyond physics. For every action, there is an opposite and equal reaction. In other words, our choices bear consequences. The student who chooses to not study should not be surprised by a poor test score. The driver who speeds should not be startled by a fine. The one who speaks with a harsh tongue can expect a spouse to grow in bitterness.

The biblical prophets proclaim this with the word *therefore*. Israel had shamefully trusted in idols ("lovers" in Hosea 2:5), *therefore* the Lord hedged her in (v. 6). It's logical. But the Lord is not bound by logic; He is bound by His word of promise. Sin logically yields temporal consequences. But in Christ, the Lord brings eternal deliverance. Israel had forgotten the Lord (v. 13), therefore . . . what? Logic expects punishment. Instead, Christ promises, "*Therefore*, behold, I am going to allure or woo her" (see v. 14). Christ runs your sin not through Newton's third law of motion but through His cross, which upends logic as grace abounds.

Christ, deliver me from the consequences of my sin. Though my sinful choices naturally separate me from You, draw me to Yourself through Your grace, for You live and reign with the Father and the Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Listen Up!

Read Hosea 1:1–3

Therefore, *behold*, I will allure her . . .
and speak tenderly to her.
(Hosea 2:14, emphasis added)

There are announcements that you can ignore—the sale of the year or the latest sports trade. And then there are announcements that you dare not ignore, so we have ways to get your attention. "General quarters!" sends sailors to their stations, ready for action. "Heads up!" alerts you that a ball is headed your direction.

"Behold!" is Scripture's way to say, "Listen up! Don't miss this." The Lord doesn't say "behold" when He calls Hosea to marry an unfaithful wife and to have unfaithful children. The gravity of that call is more than enough to get his attention. The Lord does say "behold" when He tells Hosea what He is doing. The Lord's Bride Israel has been unfaithful to Him, yet *behold*, He is going to allure her, to woo her. You don't want to miss this. The Lord acts to restore His marriage, to reconcile with His estranged Bride. And because He does what is necessary to reconcile us to Himself, we are placed on a path to reconciliation with others. *Behold*, Christ reconciles us to the Father. You don't want to miss it.

Father, we have estranged ourselves from You. Yet in Your mercy, You have sent Your Son to reconcile us to Yourself by His cross. Give us Your Spirit so that we live in peace with You and one another, for You live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Running After You

Read Luke 15:1–7

Therefore, behold, *I* will allure her . . .
and speak tenderly to her.
(Hosea 2:14, emphasis added)

I have a rule when it comes to running—I run if I am being chased and don't want to be caught. Thus, I rarely run, which is fine because there are other ways I can exercise. The last time I ran was when I was playing with my children. The younger the child, the more she delights in Dad chasing her or in chasing Dad down during a game of tag. The identity of the pursuer is the key. So, who is running after you?

Israel had a history of being chased. The Egyptian army had pursued them until the Lord delivered them through the parted sea. At the time of Hosea, false gods and foreign nations were chasing Israel. Only one pursuer was consistent—the Lord. Throughout Israel's history, the Lord was ever pursuing them. So it is with you. Christ ever pursues you. The childlike delight in being chased by Dad is eclipsed by the delight of being chased by Christ. The Shepherd runs after the lamb. The lamb's delight in being caught is only surpassed by the Shepherd's delight in catching His beloved.

Good Shepherd, "perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love [You] sought me" (*LSB* 709:3). Fill me with delight for being caught by Your love so that I live in You along with the Father and the Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LENT | WEEK ONE

A Second Honeymoon

Read Hosea 2:14–15

> Therefore, behold, I will *allure* her . . .
> and speak tenderly to her.
> (Hosea 2:14, emphasis added)

Bride and groom make vows when they don't need them so the vows will be there when they do need them. "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health" is pledged typically when the couple is immersed in the better, the richer (emotionally if not financially), and health. At the altar, the vows seem unnecessary. But later days prove how necessary they were.

So, what do you do when the worse comes along? Just gut it out? The Lord did more than gut it out. He chose to take Israel on a second honeymoon. The days in the wilderness after the exodus were a blessed honeymoon. Eventually, that honeymoon came to an end as Israel started looking toward other gods. Israel did more than just look; they were unfaithful. So, the Lord chose to embark on a second honeymoon. He would let Israel see anew the depth of His love, devotion, and provision. He reconciles His Bride to Himself with love, a love incarnate in Christ.

Lord Jesus Christ, amid my own broken promises, give me peace and confidence through Your unfading devotion to Your Bride, the church; for You live and reign with the Father and the Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.