

Return to Me

Illustration

Lottie Johl –a prostitute in the mining town of Bodie CA, in the 1880's.

I. Adulterous Love

A. Faithful husband

1. The initiating, nurturing, protective love of God:

"On the day you were born no eye pitied you...You were cast out into the open field... When I passed by you and saw you struggling in you own blood, I said, 'Live!' I made you flourish...And you grew up and arrived at full adornment...yet you were naked. You were at the age of love, so I spread the corner of My garment over you and covered your nakedness. I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine." (Ez 16:5-9)

B. Unfaithful wife - Playing the whore

1. Provocative dress

She adorns herself with ring and earrings, emphasizing erotic parts of the body, like the images of pagan fertility goddesses.

2. Infatuation

God has been displaced by pagan gods - the Baals (meaning lords or husbands).
"Israel has dolled herself up and is flirting with them at the very feasts which were given to cement her union with the Lord." (Kidner, 31)

3. Ritual fornication

Engaging in sexual acts with cultic prostitutes to promote fertility of the land.

4. Wages - payment for services

"These are my wages which my lovers have given me." (v.12)
Selling out to false gods to get what God had already freely and lavishly bestowed.

5. Illegitimate children

"They are children of whoredom...she who conceived them has acted shamefully."(v. 4)

Contaminated

The mother has played the whore, so her children are infected with her sin.

Carried away by sin

"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own desire. Then when desire has conceived, gives birth to sin..." (James 1:15).

Sin makes us feel like illegitimate children, but *"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins."(1 John 2:2)*

C. Grounds for Divorce

1. Broken vows

"You adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of your husband! You trusted in your beauty and lavished your whorings on any passerby. You took your beautiful jewels of my gold and silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore." (Ez 16:15, 17, 32)

2. Certificate of divorce

A husband may divorce his wife *"...if he finds some indecency in her." (Deut. 23:1)*

3. Punishable by death

"If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die...so you shall put away the evil from Israel." (Deut. 2:22)

II. Jealous Love

"If God would give us the best, the most satisfying, that is, if He would love us perfectly, He must offer us no less than Himself." (Piper)

A. Chasten

1. Contend – plead my cause

Verse 2 could be framed as a question:

"Is she not my wife, am I not her husband?"

"The whole thrust of the book is that God will not go back on the marriage vows He has exchanged with her. If not a question, it must be taken existentially, to mean 'she is no longer a wife to me.'" (Kidner, 27)

2. Separation

Divorced - not from Himself, but from her false lovers through judgment.

B. Expose

1. Unmasked

"Let her put away her whoring lest I strip her naked and make her like the day she was born and make her like a wilderness." (v. 3)

This looks backwards to her wilderness days before God found, nurtured and her, and looks forward to future desolation in exile.

2. Undone

We must understand depth of our sickness before we turn to the cure.

"You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Buy from Me gold refined by fire and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." (Rev 3:17, 18)

C. Protect

1. Hedge of thorns

Walled in with no way out – enforced chastity.

2. Seek and not find

Frustrated desires help us understand that our deepest longings are met in God.
"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you... of peace and not calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and pray and I will listen. And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jer 29:11-13)

D. Withhold

1. Reversal of fortune

God will *return* in judgment and take back the gifts he had lavishly given.

E. The objective

1. Return to me –repentance

"Then she shall say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.'"(v.7)

III. Captivating Love

A. He fights for you

1. To divorce you from the enemy

"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive. And gave gifts to men." (Eph 4:8, Ps 68:18)

Jesus defeated the powers of hell and darkness on the cross to set us free from the grip of Satan. We are now in the grip of Jesus and He won't let us go.

B. He covers your shame

1. Your advocate

The Angel of the Lord

Stands with Joshua the high priest, defending him against Satan's accusations.

Stripped and re-dressed

Takes away his filthy garments and replaces them with clean robes.

"Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you and I will clothe you with pure vestments." (Zech 3:4)

2. Your Bridegroom

Your wedding gift - His life

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."(Eph. 5:25-27)

United to Him - what is true of Jesus is true of you

"[Jesus] won't fail to present me to Himself 'in splendor' because it has, in fact, already been accomplished. I feel inadequate, dirty, and ashamed. God sees me as being honorable, glorious, noble, and beautiful; because of what he's done." (Fitzpatrick, 25)

C. He makes you his legitimate child

"Say to your brothers, 'you are My people,' and to your sisters, 'you have received mercy.'" (v.2:1)

1. Jesus Our brother

Is not ashamed of you

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason [Jesus] is not ashamed to call [us] brothers. Saying: I will proclaim Thy name to My brothers...Behold, I and the children God has given Me." (Heb.2:11-12)

2. God our Father

Keeps his vows

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Heb.8:10)

His mercy triumphs over judgment

"For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."(Heb.8:12)

Loves us lavishly

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." (1 John 3:1)

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