

Title: **“I WILL LOVE THEN FREELY.”**

Text: Hosea 14:4

Subject: *The Freeness of God’s Love to His Elect*

Date: Sunday Evening — June 27, 2010

Tape # Z-91b

Readings: *Ephesians 3:1-21*

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Introduction:

Turn with me to the Gospel of Hosea. I had planned to preach to you tonight from that magnificent declaration in John 13:1. — **“Having loved which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”**

- The Lord Jesus loved “*his own.*”
- He loved his own, “which were in the world.”
- He loved them “*unto the end.*”

But when I began preparing that message, I went back to many of the Old Testament pictures, prophecies, and promises regarding Jehovah’s love for his elect. When I got to Hosea 14:4 I knew I could proceed no further. So John 13:1 will have to wait until I return from California.

Here is God’s great promise of grace, super-abounding grace to sinners who come to him seeking mercy and grace in Christ. Are you ready? Are you listening? The Lord God says, ——— “*I will heal their backsliding, I will*

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love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him”
(Hosea 14:4).

In verses 5 and 6 he tells us how he will heal the apostasy of sinners by his grace.

(Hosea 14:5-6) “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. ⁶ His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.”

Then, in verses 7 and 8, the Lord calls our attention to a specific people, a people who are the objects of his grace, a specific people whom he has loved with an everlasting love, a people who demonstrate the infinite freeness of his love.

In these two verses, our great, gracious God, declares that the salvation of sinners is a matter of absolute certainty. There are some sinners in this world to whom God will be gracious. There is an elect multitude of men and women who fully deserve his everlasting wrath, who are the objects of his everlasting love, a people who shall be brought to him in repentance, a people who shall be saved by his matchless free and sovereign grace.

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(Hosea 14:7-8) “They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon. 8 Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: *I am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.”

There is a people, a great multitude, who dwell under the shadow of the Almighty, who shall be saved.

This 7th verse is talking about God’s elect. — Both those who are already saved and those who have not yet been saved. They all dwell under his shadow.

- They dwell under his shadow.
- They shall return.
- They shall revive.
- They shall grow.
- They shall possess all the beauty of Christ. – “*The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.*”

Like Ephraim, God’s elect are a people full of iniquity, worthy of wrath, deserving to be abandoned forever in hell; but they are his people and they shall yet be saved.

- Ephraim was full of sin.
- Ephraim was idolatrous.

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- Ephraim was joined to his idols and would not let them go.
- Ephraim was a people so obstinately joined to their idols that God told his prophet to leave them alone (4:17). Ephraim was dead (13:1-3).
- But Ephraim was still God’s!
- The Lord God cries, — “How shall I give thee up O Ephraim? – I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man!” (Hosea 11:8-9).

(Hosea 13:4) “Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, (*I have redeemed you!*) and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.”

(Hosea 13:9) “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help.”

(Hosea 13:14) “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”

Blessed be his name, **repentance is not in him** (Romans 11:29). He is God, not a man! Read verse 8 again, and hear what God says about his chosen Ephraim.

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(Hosea 14:8) “Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.”

Ephraim is mine! I’ve heard him! — Referring to verses 2-3.

(Hosea 14:1-3 AV) “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. ² Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. ³ Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”

(Jeremiah 31:18) “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus*; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed *to the yoke*: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou *art* the LORD my God.”

I’ve observed him! — “While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him!”

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I am a green fir tree. — This is our God. This is our Savior. This is our all-glorious Christ! — The green fir tree is a tree with branches hanging so low to the ground that anyone who wants to can get hold of it. — It is a tree with leaves so thick that when you stand under it, even in a heavy rain, it will shelter you from the storm. — Its fragrance is sweet, subtle, not over powering. Yet, any one who touches it smells like it!

Read the last line of verse 8 and learn its doctrine. — **“From me is thy fruit found.”** — Grace is God’s gift. Salvation is God’s work. If we live, if we revive, it will be because he gave us life, because he brought us to himself, because he gave us faith, because he wrought repentance in us.

(Romans 9:16) “So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

(Romans 11:26) “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

This is God’s method of grace. God almighty saves whom he will. Those he saves are the most obstinate, undeserving,

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apostate rebels to be found among men. He saves them in such a way that their salvation glorifies him alone. And his ways are right.

(Hosea 14:9) “Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

- God’s ways are right.
- The just, the righteous, those who are made just before God, bowing to God’s ways in all things, shall walk in them.
- The rebel, the unbeliever, every sinner who will not come to Christ, shall perish in them.

Now, let’s go back to verse four. I want us to take one sentence from this verse and milk it. The Lord God says, “*I will love them freely!*” **How I love that word, “freely!”** Have you ever noticed how that word is used in the Scriptures with reference to God’s grace and salvation in Christ?

At the very beginning, even before Adam and Eve fell in the Garden, the Lord God seemed to point our original parents to the fact that everything our race gets from him is

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free. And after the fall, the whole of salvation is described as God’s free gift to sinners in Christ.

(Genesis 2:16) “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:”

(Matthew 10:8) “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”

(Romans 3:24) “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”

(Romans 8:32) “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

(1 Corinthians 2:12) “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

(Revelation 21:6) “And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

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(Revelation 22:17) “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Proposition: The love of God is free. The grace of God is free. God’s salvation is free!

The Lord God says, “I will love them freely!” This is his answer to the prayer of penitent sinners, “receive us graciously.” The love of God for us does not begin when we repent and turn to him in faith, or when he grants us a sense of pardoned sin. His love is from everlasting. But as his love for us, being everlasting must be free, so when he manifest his love in saving mercy, he manifests it in such a way that we know it is altogether free. God’s love to sinners in Christ is a love that is...

- Without Cause.
- Without Condition.
- Without Measure.
- Without Beginning.
- Without End.

It is free. There is nothing in us to motivate it, nothing in us to merit it, nothing in us to influence it, nothing in us to destroy it! It is free!

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John Gill put it in these words. – “God’s love to poor, needy sinners, “as it flows from the free sovereign will and pleasure of God in Christ; so it is as freely manifested, and continues upon the same bottom, and is displayed in a most liberal and profuse donation of blessings of grace to them. This love is free in its original, and is liberal and bountiful in the effects of it; and makes the objects of it a free, willing, and bountiful people too.”

“I will love them freely!” – Learn what that means, and you have learned the message of this Book. **Spurgeon** said, “This sentence is a body of divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian, and he who can dive into its fullness is a true Master in divinity.”

“I will love them freely!” – That is a condensation of the gospel of God’s grace and glory. It is the gospel message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

Everything hinges upon the word “*freely.*” — **“I will love them freely.”** God’s love gushes out to sinners as a mighty river from heaven to earth “*freely!*”

- The holy Lord God could never love us in any other way.

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- The only way in which love can come from the holy, infinite God to fallen, guilty sinners is “*freely.*”
- This is spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, nor purchased it, nor sought it, nor even desired it. It is free!

That which is free is given without money and without price. It is opposed to all idea of bargaining or bartering. He who gives freely gives only because there is a need, expecting nothing in return. That which is free is without compensation. That which is free is spontaneous, without inducement of any kind.

How can I speak of the freeness of God’s love? I certainly can’t describe it. There are no examples in human history that can adequately illustrate it. Even those pictures of God’s love in Holy Scripture (great as they are) fall short of it.

- Adam’s Love for Eve.
- Jacob’s Love for Rachel (Gen. 29:20).
- Boaz’ Love for Ruth.
- Hosea’s Love for Gomer.
- The Father’s Love for the Prodigal. — “*He saw him. — He ran. — He fell on his neck. — And kissed him!*”

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But if we would know the love of God for us, if we would know anything about this love so graciously bestowed upon sinners that it can only be described as free, we must look away to God himself. We must see it only as it is displayed in the person and work of God’s darling Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

COVENANT LOVE

I might point you back to that time when there was no time, when God dwelt alone in the ineffable glory of his own holy being, Father Son and Holy Spirit. Back yonder, in old eternity, the Lord God loved us with an everlasting love.

Eternal covenant love must be free!

(Jeremiah 31:3) “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, **Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.**”

(Jeremiah 31:31-34) “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them,

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saith the LORD: (33) But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.** (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for **I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**”

(Jeremiah 32:37-41) “Behold, **I will gather them** out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and **I will cause them to dwell safely:** (38) And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: (39) And **I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:** (40) And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that **I will not turn away from them, to do them good;** but **I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.** (41) Yea, **I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.**”

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(Romans 9:13-18) “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

CALVARY LOVE

How can I persuade you of the freeness of God’s love to sinners? I am lost in the wonder of it; and I am at a loss in trying to set it before you. What can I say? Look away yonder, my friend, to Calvary. Oh, look away to Christ crucified upon the cursed tree and behold the love of God manifest in all its glorious brilliance!

(John 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

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(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(1 John 3:16) “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.”

(1 John 4:10-11) “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

(1 John 4:19) “We love him, because he first loved us.”

Behold the Son of God hanging upon the cursed tree.
Can you hear what he declares? – Do you not hear these words echoing from his bleeding heart? – “*I will love them freely!*” Herein is love!

- The Son of God died for sinners who deserved to die.
- The Lord Jesus died for sinners who wished that he should be made to die!

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- The Lord of Glory died for sinners, bearing their sins and all the wrath of God their sins deserved.
- He died for us because he loved us.
- He loved us and gave himself for us, knowing that he would get no love in return, except he himself create it!

Calvary love is free love. Well might it be said of God’s elect as it was said concerning Lazarus when the Master wept at his tomb, — *“Behold how he loved him!”*

CONVERTING LOVE

What more can I say? How can I make you to see the freeness of God’s love for us? Let me make one more stab at it. We see the freeness of God’s love in the conversion of his people by his almighty grace. This is what the words of our text particularly speak of, converting, regenerating, saving love. — *“I will love them freely!”* Here it is.

(Ezekiel 16:1-6) “Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, (2) Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, (3) And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity *is* of the land of Canaan; thy father *was* an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. (4) And *as for* thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut,

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neither wast thou washed in water to supple *thee*; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. (5) None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. (6) And when **I passed by thee**, and **saw thee** polluted in thine own blood, **I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live**; yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live.”

(Ezekiel 16:8-14) “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, **thy time was the time of love**; and **I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness**: yea, I swear unto thee, and **entered into a covenant with thee**, saith the Lord GOD, and **thou becamest mine**. (9) **Then washed I thee** with water; yea, **I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil**. (10) **I clothed thee also with broidered work**, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and **I girded thee** about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. (11) **I decked thee** also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. (12) And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. (13) Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat

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fine flour, and honey, and oil: and **thou wast exceeding beautiful**, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. (14) And thy renown went forth among the heathen for **thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee**, saith the Lord GOD.”

(Ezekiel 16:60-63) “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. (61) **Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed**, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. (62) And I will establish my covenant with thee; and **thou shalt know that I am the LORD**: (63) That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, **when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done**, saith the Lord GOD.”

The Lord God has promised this to all his people. This is God’s promise to every poor, needy, guilty, helpless sinner who comes to him trusting Christ alone for grace and salvation. — **“I will love them freely!”** Let me tell you what that means.

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- There is nothing in us that could ever attract the the love of God and induce him to love us.
- There is nothing in any man that can prevent the love of God.
- There is nothing in any of us, and nothing can ever be done by us to destroy the love of God freely bestowed upon us in Christ from eternity.

It is this love, the love of God in Christ; indeed, it is the very freeness of this love that constrains us to love him. Who can resist this love? Who would abuse such love?

(2 Corinthians 5:14) “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:”

(Galatians 2:20) “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor

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drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20) “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

It is this great, free love that caused the Lord God to cry, — “*How shall I give thee up O Ephraim? – I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man!*” Blessed be his name, he would not give us up! – He could not give us up! – He will not give us up! He has sworn, “*I will love them freely!*” – And he does!

AMEN!