

DCF:

Amy had to have an operation. Her appendix was inflamed, and the doctor was sure she needed to have it out. Well, Amy hated pain (don’t we all?) and was afraid of the operation. So she asked the doctor “Are you going to hurt me?”

The doctor thought about that question a bit. He then answered “Amy, if I don’t take that appendix out, you’re going to get very sick and maybe even die. I care about you. I want you well. But I have to operate on you to make that happen. It will hurt when you wake up for a while and I’m sorry that’s the way it has to be. But I will guarantee you this: I may hurt you, but I will never harm you.”

Our spiritual doctor operates on the same wavelength. He doesn’t like hurting us, but sometimes that’s the only way He can heal us. He loves us and wants to see us spiritually well for an eternity. This morning as we look at Hosea, we’ll see the truth of the saying “**SOMETIMES GOD’S LOVE HURTS!**” He wants us to face the truth about ourselves because He wants to see us in His presence.

Part One: He wants us to face the truth about ourselves

Israel was sleeping spiritually and they wouldn’t wake up! God wanted their attention, their hearts and their devotion as they worshiped and lived for Him. But that’s not what they were doing. They were inattentive - asleep at the wheel. The Israelites were just going through the motions, showing up on Saturdays and sleepwalking through the service. Plus, they had incorporated idol worship into their lives. They would worship false gods during the week and then put in an appearance at the Lord’s temple .

The amazingly awful thing was, they had the clear words of the Lord. They had the temple of God. They had a history with the Lord. He had led them out of Egypt, watched over them for thousands of years, and brought them into a wonderful land. All the blessings that the Lord had given to them over the years were being routinely ignored by the people. His people were sliding further and further away from the Lord. Oh, physically they still went through the motions, but their hearts were far from Him. ***“Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.”***

So, what do you do? Sometimes God’s love hurts when He tries to wake us up. First, the Lord announces to them that He is displeased with them. He sent prophet after prophet to try and wake them up. And finally, He let their neighboring nations invade them. ***“Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my moth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.”***

Why did God do this? He wanted them to wake up and return to Him. This is God’s tough love. He knew what would happen if His people continued to neglect their faith. He knew what would happen if someone didn’t wake them up. They would spiritually sleep their way to hell. And the Lord loves them way too much to let that happen. It hurt the people of Israel to go into exile, to be oppressed by other nations, but it was to turn them from the spiritually destructive path that they were on.

Now, I don’t want you to think that when bad stuff happens to us in our lives that God is trying to wake us up from spiritual apathy. But we should at least ask ourselves that question. Is God trying to wake me up? Sometimes bad things happen to us just because we live in a sinful world. Sometimes we suffer for the sins of others. Like when we lose our jobs because our bosses commit fraud, or when we are hospitalized because someone else drove drunk and smashed into us. Or, when we are hurt emotionally because someone else let anger or envy get the best of them. Or, when we get cancer or arthritis or some other disease. Many times these things happen just because sin is in this world.

But... It may be that God is trying to wake us up. Maybe our love is becoming like the morning mist, which disappears as soon as the sun rises a bit above the horizon. Maybe we’re just going through the motions and not giving God our hearts. Maybe we’re bailing out of serving the Lord when it gets a bit difficult, or demands a bit of our precious time. Some people bail out of religion when it starts to interfere with their golf schedule, or their hobbies, or the way they talk and relate to others. “You mean God expects me to live for Him every day? Nah, I’m not going to do that. Too hard.” A lot of people look at religion the same way they look at marriage. If it doesn’t fit my life, my desires, then I’m outta here!”

God uses His Law to cut us to pieces. He tears down our selfish self-righteousness when He says ***“Be perfect, as Your heavenly Father is perfect.”*** He injures our pride when He tells us ***“There is no one that does good; no, not one.”*** He slaps us with His Law when He says ***“Unless a person is born of water and spirit, he***

cannot enter the kingdom of God.” And if His Law doesn't work, He may try to wake us up with painful experiences. Why? Because He loves us and wants us to be in heaven with Him. Sometimes God's love does hurt, especially when He's trying to wake us up.

But it sure doesn't hurt when we repent of our sins.

Part Two: He wants to see us in His presence

Hosea urges his listeners to repent of their sins. Sin can keep us away from the Lord, and God wants us in His presence forever. That's why Hosea urges them to admit their guilt and turn back to God. Admit you didn't put God first in your life. Admit that you were just going through the motions. Admit that you didn't trust God to take care of you in life. Admit the sins that are detailed in His Law. Admit them, and change your mind about such sins. That's what repentance is. Believing that you did sin and admitting it to the Lord. Repentance doesn't mean feeling sorry you got caught. Repentance means believing that what you did is a violation of God's holy Law. Repentance means believing you don't want to do it again.

When we do repent, when we ask God to forgive us of our sins, He blesses us. He blesses us with His forgiveness. He blesses us with His love. He blesses us with the reassurance that we do have eternal life through the work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was on the cross, He suffered and died to pay for our sins of inattention, of selfish self-righteousness, our sins of thought, word and action.

God forgives us because He wants to see us in His presence forever. Now, so many people talk about "hoping" the Lord will come again. They talk about "hoping" they will go to heaven. God guarantees this to us! Listen again to Hosea: ***"As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."*** Our Lord will come again to take us home to heaven. Life with God forever. Life that has no pain, no sorrow and no tears. Our Lord will come with the greatest gift of all, the gift of paradise. Guaranteed by the love of our Lord. And that fact of God's love brings pure happiness and joy. No pain. Sometimes God's love hurts, but He wants us to repent so that we can be in His presence forever.

"Come, let us return to the Lord!" Come, let us repent of all our sins and seek the Lord's forgiveness. Let us repent of our fickle hearts, our self-centered attitudes, our lackadaisical worship. Let us repent of words spoken in anger and all the sinful actions that we have done. Let us repent of our evil thoughts and our shallow thankfulness for all the blessings God has given to us. Let us return to the Lord and bask in the wonder of His forgiveness. Come, and hear once again ***"As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed your transgressions from you."*** Come, and hear once again ***"God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."*** Come, hear and be reassured of the Lord's love ***"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."***

God wants our hearts, not just our actions. Christianity is not performance art. A Christian life is living what you believe, living what God has taught you. We need to ask ourselves the question "Why am I doing what I'm doing?" Are we living to please ourselves, or are we living to say thank you to God? When we live to please the Lord, out of love and thanks for saving us, our lives will improve. There's no doubt about that! Oh, our finances won't suddenly be fantastic. Our mental health won't suddenly be perfect. Our relationships won't suddenly be all wonderful and rosy. But they will improve. When we put God first and seek His wisdom, He will bless us. But this blessing is first and foremost a spiritual blessing. When we seek God's will in our lives, our faith will grow, our relationship with God will become stronger and we will be able to see and implement His will quicker and better in our lives. When we repent, God's love is clearer and stronger in our hearts. And that's truly enjoyable!

Enjoy the love of God as we repent. We know that when we repent of our sins we are acceptable to Him. The blood of Jesus Christ purifies our hearts and lives so that we can stand right next to our loving God. Our forgiven hearts are cherished by the Lord, and He makes sure we know that. Plus, there's the comfort of knowing that we will always be with Him now and forever. Sometimes God's love hurts, but when we repent of our sins, it is the most enjoyable thing in the world.

After Amy's operation, she immediately felt better. It hurt for a week or so, but soon she was back to full health. I pray that if the Lord practices tough love on us, that soon we too will be back to full spiritual health quickly. It's true. ***"SOMETIMES GOD'S LOVE HURTS!"*** It hurts when He tries to wake us up but not when we repent.

AMEN