

The Sunday Reader

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Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...

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About Love & Pain

"Love" is an overworked and often misused concept. Some say they love food and we can tell that's so by looking at them, Ha! But, the love of God is almost beyond human comprehension. God's love is more stern, and splendid than we might imagine...love can be painful. That love can be painful is seen in several Divine analogies (comparisons) about the purpose of God's working in our lives.

1) The Potter & The Clay (Isaiah 64:8; Romans 9:21). We are not figuratively, but in truth a Divine work of art. If the clay were alive, it might wish it were only a simple bowl, it might feel the pain suffered under the hands of the potter--it might even be unhappy. In the same way, we might wish God had designed for us a less glorious and difficult destiny, but then we are wishing not for more love, but for less.

2) The Physician & Patient (getting shots hurts!). "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." (Matt. 9:12). Sometimes the physician in treating us hurts us. Physicians realize that some pain now works to our advantage later.

3) The Vine and Branches. Pruning may not appear logical, ah, but it is - John 15:2. Pruning does not sound pleasant to the branch.

4) The Father & Son - the Biblical analogy of God the Father treating us like children needing discipline. My father is a strict disciplinarian... "This is going to hurt you more than me!" or "I'm doing this for your own good!" Read Hebrews 12:4-13 where we learn that discipline serves to make us better.

5) Man & Animal. Man was created in God's image, then instructed to "fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the

birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26-28). Man interferes with the dog and makes it more lovable than it was in mere nature. In the same way, God disciplines us, and may even allow us to be unhappy so as to become more fully lovable. Job 23:10 " ... when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." Read also James 1:2-3.

6) The Journey To Heaven. Romans 8:20 "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope." God provides us some pleasant inns along the way, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home. Even for Christians...narrow is the gate and difficult is the way (Matthew 7:13-14). Constraining, confining and restrictive does not sound pleasant.

In conclusion, to ask that God be content with us as we are is to ask that God cease to be God. You see, God already loves us; now He is laboring to make us lovable! "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." (Hebrews 2:10). If true of the author, Jesus, how much more the followers! Our earthly happiness is not the end God has in view: but, when we are such as He can love us without impediment, we shall in fact be eternally happy. "The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His." (George MacDonald, Unspoken Sermons). Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 sometime. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18).

Credits: C.S. Lewis' book: "The Problem Of Pain" and a Gary Kerr sermon were helpful in writing this.

