

Love Hurts

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[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 4th of July 2004. The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled Love Hurts and is based on 2 Corinthians 1.12-2.11.

Father, we do indeed thank you for your great love for us. We pray that as we read and hear from your word now that you will change us. Father, that you give us courage to apply what we hear to our lives, that we may bring you honour and glory in all that we do.

We pray this in your son's name. Amen. It seems to me that as I was growing up, I was the one that always seemed to be in trouble in our household.

My sisters would cry out in a very loud voice, Dad, Paul hit me. Of course, at that point my father would come and I would be punished soundly for hitting one of my four younger sisters.

It always seemed to me that I was always the one in trouble, never my sisters. It was either because I was the oldest or I was the son, but I always seemed to be the one in trouble.

[1 : 24] But as I reflect on those times when I was punished by my father, there would be great anger that I would be punished. At times I was, I guess, rightly punished for doing those things.

And in those times I would feel quite angry with my father. But then always, without fail, my father would come back sometime later and he'd sit me down.

I knew exactly what would be coming. He would say, You know you did the wrong thing, don't you? And you'd be going, Yes, yes, I know. He says, You know I love you, don't you? And that, at that point you just sort of feel like, Oh, I want to be so angry with you.

But you love me. You care for me. And you can see in my father's eyes at times that it actually hurt him greatly when the times that he punished me. At times, love hurts.

Love can be a painful thing. It's only now that I have children myself that I look at my children and I feel great love for them.

[2 : 29] But the thing that I guess I fear is that one day they may reject that love. That they may reject me and walk away. They may just go and live their own life and run away from me.

To be rejected as a parent, rightly or wrongly, is a terrible and hard thing. Paul has a deep love for the church of Corinth.

A deep, profound love. He is proud of them as a father is proud as a child. He cares for them. He looks after them and provides for them.

His love is a love that is deep for the Corinthian church. The love of a father for a child. A love that hurts. He is a loving figure.

A figure that is prepared to discipline those whom he loves. As we've seen last week, we got a hint that this letter from beginning to end is a defence of Paul's authority.

[3 : 26] The ones that Paul loves, these Corinthian churches, are turning away from Paul. They're rejecting him and his authority and they're following others.

They look at Paul and they see weakness. They don't see strength and so they go following after other areas. Other people who look and appear to have such great and profound wisdom, great and profound authority and they go chasing after them, these false teachers that come into the church.

But Paul in this letter defends his authority. He defends his right to treat them as a father. Paul starts at the beginning of our passage which you might like to have open as we work through this long passage on page 938.

In 2 Corinthians 1, verse 12 to 14, Paul starts by talking about that his love for them is such that he has acted with integrity.

He is a person who has dealt with them in his actions with sincerity and frankness. He has acted in a godly way, not in a worldly fashion, not in a fashion that promotes himself, that glorifies himself, not in a manner that is self-centred, in a way that God has worked in his life by God's grace.

[4 : 44] Indeed, this is our boast, Paul says, the testimony of our conscience. We have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God and all the more toward you.

Paul says, right at the beginning, I am a man of integrity, a man who has been shaped by God. He also says in verses 13 and 14, his integrity goes through to what he writes.

He doesn't write things that are unclear or things that can be ambiguous or things that bring about artificiality or pseudo-sophistication or a means of pulling the wool over their eyes.

No, Paul wants to write clearly to them because he loves them, he cares for them, he wants them to know the truth. Why? Well, have a look there in verse 13 and 14. We write, nothing other than what you can read and also understand.

I hope you will understand until the end that on the day, as you already have understood us in part, that on the day of the Lord, Jesus, we are your boast even as you are our boast.

[5 : 49] What is Paul's desire? That they would hang on to the truth that he proclaims, that they will hang on to him and the words that he says so that on the day of the Lord, that day of judgment, they will stand firm because Paul's words and what he has to say is the basis upon which they will stand firm.

Paul here states in general terms he is a man of integrity, a man who is transparent, a man who loves them dearly.

Well, Paul then in the next section of the next paragraph then explains his defensive, he explains his behaviour a little bit more clearly.

You see, as we see in verses 15 and 16, he starts talking about how he has changed his travel plans. Look there in verses 15 and 16. Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first so that you might have a double favour.

I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and then to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. And Paul speaks about having two visits to the Corinthian church.

[6 : 57] But just look back to the end of 1 Corinthians and the travel plans that he writes there. In 1 Corinthians 16, verse 5, you only have to turn back one page, he says there, I will visit you after passing through Macedonia.

So his plans, original plans was, after setting up the church, he would come through Macedonia and then come down to the Greek peninsula where Corinth is and he'll spend some time with them there.

He says, perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. That was his original plans. I'm down and spend a good long time in Corinth.

That's his plans. But as we see here in 2 Corinthians, he's changed those plans. He's all of a sudden decided that he's going to go to the Corinthian churches first, then go to Macedonia, then come back to Corinth again a second time.

Now those who are the false teachers and those who are questioning Paul's authority, they start thinking, here's a man who's changing his mind all the time. He's fickle. He can't be a man who is trusted. He can't be a man who knows God's will if he's changing it all the time.

[8 : 07] He can't be a man of God's spirit. A man wouldn't change his mind all the time. That's the charge that Paul is writing against. But he wants to let them know as he saw in verses 12 to 14, he is a man of integrity, a man who is transparent in all his dealings with him.

So he goes on to explain that he is not a man who is fickle, but a man who is reliable. Why? Because God is reliable. And Jesus is reliable.

Have a look there in verse 17. He asks the question, was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make plans according to human standards ready to say yes, yes and no, no at the same time? That's his questioning.

Do you think that I'm just someone who gets blown around by the wind? In verse 18 he says, as surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been yes and no.

So just as God is faithful, so is his word to them. Paul is anchoring his faithfulness in God's faithfulness. And look at the way that Paul then goes on in verse 19.

[9 : 11] For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus, Timothy and I, was not yes and no, but in him always yes. He then points to Jesus.

He says, see this man Jesus, he was not yes and no. This is the one that we proclaim to you. This is the one that you had your faith on in the beginning, the one that we proclaim as Son of God, as the Messiah.

This one, he was faithful. He was not yes and no and explains why he's not yes and no in the next part. For in him, every one of God's promises is a yes. That is, all the Old Testament promises, no matter what they are, find their fulfillment in Christ.

God is faithful. Jesus is faithful. Jesus faithfully brings about the promises of God. They all find their yes in him. Jesus is not someone who is blown around by the worldly desires, but is faithful to God's plan.

Paul says in verse 20 in light of this, the second part there, for this very reason, it is through him that we say the amen to the glory of God. That is, because of this, he is able to glorify God.

[10 : 22] All his actions are to glorify God, not to glorify himself. He seeks to glorify God. It's God's purpose that all things be about glorifying himself.

Paul then goes on in verse 21 to again talk about how Jesus is the one that it is through him that God establishes both Paul and the Corinthian church.

He established, but it is God who establishes us with you in Christ. That is, it is God who has brought them into a relationship with him. Secondly, it is God who has anointed them with the Holy Spirit.

It is God who has put his seal on them. And Paul then talks about it as being the first instalment, a down payment put on their lives guaranteeing that they will be in heaven with him, with God.

Paul seeks here for them to understand that his reliability is based upon the reliability of God and the way that God has worked in his life. Just as God is faithful, Paul is faithful also.

[11 : 29] Paul is not changing his mind, but Paul seeks to come and bring a double blessing. He is not changing it for his own sake. He is making plans to show his faithfulness to them.

He is giving them a double chance to be strengthened. He is giving them a second chance. He is giving them more than what he is doing with the Macedonian churches, such as he loved for them.

But as we see in the next verse, the charge still could be leveled to him that he hasn't actually fulfilled what he said he would. So he had these plans of making two visits to the Corinthians, but he hasn't made the second visit yet.

Is he therefore a vacillating person? Is he really fickle after all? We see in the next paragraph, verses 23 through to 2.4, that Paul is not indeed fickle, but a man who has great love for the Corinthians, a man who wants to spare them and give them an opportunity to repent.

Notice the way that he starts in verse 23. He starts by making an oath. He makes by, starting here by saying, this is a very serious promise I am making here.

[12 : 37] I am willing to bring myself to God's judgment if I should be wrong in this. That is, he is inviting God's divine judgment upon himself if he is false in this.

I mean, that is a terrible thing. That is an incredible promise, an oath to make. But if he is making a promise, may God strike him down. Paul is serious about his commitment to them.

And he says, it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. I do not mean that we lord it over your faith. Rather, we are workers with you for your joy because you stand firm in the faith.

But Paul decided not to make the second return visit straight away but to hold off because he wanted to give them a chance to repent. As we see in a moment, a terrible thing has happened in Corinth when he visited the first time.

There's some terrible happenings such that they've ignored him and Paul wants to give them a chance to repent. If Paul wants to come and be in their midst for that second visit as he had planned, then he would have to come in the midst of rebellion and he would be compelled to pronounce God's judgment on them.

[13 : 50] He may even have to oust many of them from the church. Here Paul is not trying to establish his own authority notice in that second part but he's trying to help them to stand firm for on that great day when Jesus will return.

In verses 1 to 4 of chapter 2 he then gives a little bit more explanation of what happened in that visit, that first visit and the reason why he's held off.

Look there. So I made up my mind not to make another painful visit for if I cause you pain who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained and I wrote as I did so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice for I'm confident about all of you that my joy would be joy of all of you.

As we read here and in other places Paul indicates that what happened was after writing 1 Corinthians he hoped that the Corinthian church would turn back to God and repent of the way that they were living but they didn't.

They kept on in rebellion. So when Paul arrived for that first visit they abused him. In particular it appears as though one person probably an influential person in the church decided that he wasn't going to repent and in fact he was going to abuse Paul.

[15 : 06] Perhaps even some commentators say that he was even physically abused. So Paul leaves them and what does he do? He writes a painful letter.

A severe letter. A letter disciplining them. Verse 3 says that there. I wrote as I did so that when I came I might not suffer again. He writes a very painful letter.

A very severe letter. It's a letter that we actually don't have in the Bible. That has been lost in time. Such is Paul's love for them. Paul wrote this letter that God might use it as an instrument to bring many back to himself.

And it appears as we read on that that's exactly what happened. That the majority did indeed turn back but not all have repented of their sin. Hence why we have two Corinthians.

Note here just for a moment again the love that Paul has in writing to the Corinthians. For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

[16 : 12] Here is the Father loving his child. Disciplining his child. Feel the hurt that Paul has in disciplining his child. Feel the hurt and the pain that Paul feels.

the anguish of heart the tears. Paul is moved deeply by them. He has a great and abundant amount of love for these Corinthians but he knows for him to love them the way that he should he knows that he must discipline them.

For Paul I guess it is true the saying this is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you. Well what is what is the situation that happens after him sending the letter?

In verses 5 through to 11 Paul talks about some of the things that happened after him writing this letter. He also explains I guess a little bit more detail about why he sent the letter.

If anyone has caused pain he has caused it not to me but to some extent not to exaggerate it to all of you. This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person.

[17 : 18] Paul indicates here in verse 6 that the majority did repent with this severe letter. They recognised the error of their way. They recognised the hurt that it not only caused Paul but themselves and they decided that as a church they would take discipline into their hands and what they decided is they would punish that person.

But Paul notes here that it actually had the desired effect. Paul says this punishment by the majority is enough for such a person. So now instead you should forgive and console him so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

The punishment that the church brought was such that this man who brought about great pain to Paul repented and Paul says just as I keep on showing you mercy you as a church show mercy to that person.

Forgive him console him. Verse 9 So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. I wrote for this reason to test and to know whether you are obedient in everything.

Anyone whom you forgive I also forgive. What I have forgiven if I have forgiven anything has been for the sake for your sake in the presence of Christ.

[18 : 33] Paul encourages them to forgive this man just as he has forgiven them just as God has brought about forgiveness for his people. Notice again in verse 9 Paul writes this and encourages them to forgive him as a test of Paul's authority.

Will they obey him? Will they forgive this man and bring them back into his midst? But Paul says this is a serious matter. You need to do this because Satan is lurking at the door wanting to get his foot in, wanting to tear the church apart.

So he says there, and we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan for we are not ignorant of his designs. The temptation is to bear grudges, to transform punishment into an act of revenge, to go beyond what is needed.

But Paul encourages them to be people of forgiveness, a people of love, a people eager to restore. Well here is a man of great integrity, isn't it? A man of great love for his church.

He is a man who acts in a proper way, a man with sincerity and frankness. He is transparent in all his writings and dealings. He is not blown around by the winds of change.

[19 : 51] He is faithful just as God and Christ are faithful. He is reliable. He is prepared to make tough calls. He is prepared to write hard letters. He is prepared to discipline, even if it causes him great pain.

He is a man of great love, a man who acts in a godly way, a man who wants them to change, a man who wants them to be people who are people who forgive as well.

Notice here Paul is not a man who is following the worldly desires, the wisdom of the world as it is described in verse 12. He is not self-centered or self-dependent.

He is not interested in his own glorification. He is there to build up others. He is not there to build up himself and pull down others. He is not there with that me first mantra of our culture.

He is not interested in the position or prestige or power. He is concerned for the reputation and the restoration of others. He is not interested in appearances, but what is on the inside.

[20 : 55] Paul doesn't play by the world's rules. He doesn't allow the worldly wisdom to creep into his life, but he is thoroughly God-centered. He recognizes that God is the one who has brought change in him.

He is the one who recognizes that God is the one who shapes his ethical behavior, that God, he reflects on the character of God and allows that to change and mold the pattern of his life.

He is there seeking God's glory, but not only is he God-centered, he is also Christ-centered. He recognizes that it is through Christ that he is established in this relationship.

He recognizes that he is to be Christ-like in his conduct, to reflect on the way that Christ has brought about change in him and act in light of that.

Paul is also concerned for the body of Christ. He recognizes that the church has a responsibility to one another, to care for one another. He also recognizes that the church must be willing to forgive, that they must be a people who are transparent, people of integrity.

[22 : 01] Stop and reflect for a moment. Is that this church here? Is that the ministers that we have here, the people who are our leaders? Is it the congregations that we have here?

Are we people that allow the worldly desires and passions to creep in and shape the way that we live? Are we God-centered people, allowing God to shape our lives?

Are we people who are prepared to love each other as Paul loved the church? Are we people who are prepared to do tough love? Love that hurts.

When I reflect on this, we of all people should know what this is all about. For we have seen it in the cross, haven't we? Tough love. Love that displays suffering and hurt for the sake of others.

Love that has brought us into relationship with God. Knowing how much God has suffered for us. How much more ought we to be people who also love one another with this same love?

[23 : 01] Amen.