

If the Lord Beats the Hell Out Of You

Luke 12:32-48

#22 in our series “Stories Jesus Told”

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Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to preach. And I pray that you would help us to trust you. I thank you Lord that you can take just a guy and speak your Word through just a guy. But Holy Spirit, would you guard our hearts from anything that would not be of you, and would you apply yourself, Lord, wherever the truth comes out. Father I pray that you would help us to trust. It is just kind of a weird thing that we’re hitting this parable on Valentine’s Day. I didn’t plan it out that way, but maybe You did. So it’s in Your name that we pray and that we ask You to help us to preach. Amen.

Message

This world is a violent world. All suffering is the violation of your will, and so we all suffer violence:

- There are earthquakes, tsunamis, destruction and death, and we suffer violence.
- Men break into homes, beat people, and molest people.
- Conmen bind people to contracts and extort the weak and vulnerable.
- We suffer physical violence, emotional violence, corporate violence, and even spiritual violence.

So we’ve all been violated, and we wonder what it means. We live in a violent world, and into that world Jesus speaks the Gospel. In Luke 6, (which Karl preached on last week) He says, “*Love your enemies and turn the other cheek.*” Some call it “the gospel of non—violence.” But that’s where it gets a bit confusing because God doesn’t always seem to be non-violent.

People think that’s what I’m saying when I preach: “God is love.” They think I’m saying that He’s non-violent, that He would never violate your will. But just telling you to “*Love your enemies*” kind of already violates your will (You will that He didn’t say that). Well, in the Old Testament, He certainly seems to violate our will. He’s violent. In the second century A.D., Marcion taught the God of the Old Testament was a different God than the God of the New Testament. Yet the violence isn’t only in the Old Testament, the violence is also in the New Testament, or maybe it *is* the New Testament:

Clip from *The Passion of the Christ*

[Jesus’ hands are chained to a block as He kneels before it. Roman soldiers are whipping Him and others are laughing. Jesus clenches His fist in pain.]

Now you may say, “That wasn’t God’s will...but our will.” (And if you say that, you’re onto something.) Yet in the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus sweat great drops of blood, He prayed, “*Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will.*”

Isaiah 53:10 *"It was the will of the Lord to crush him."*

This is a profound mystery, but in the garden, Jesus, (who, all His life, had willed just what the Father willed) had a different will than His Father's will—God's will. And God violated that will, yet Jesus surrendered that will to God's will on a tree in the garden, and He died. It's absolutely astounding! But still, it's easy to think God the Father is the violent one, and Jesus the Son is the non-violent one (the nice one).

But Jesus tells a story that is a little bit violent.

Luke 12: 35 - 46

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master (kurios: Lord), when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open the door immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants but know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would've watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Then Peter said to him, "Lord, do you speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward (oikonomos: house manager)..."

It's where we get our word economy. The *oikonomos* manages his Lord's economy—he gives stuff away!

Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at that hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

Kind of violent, don't you think? *"The Lord"* literally cut the unfaithful servant in two. And it sure seems like that Lord is the Lord Jesus. And the servant could be someone like Peter. The Lord literally cut him in two, and put *"his portion"* with the unbelievers.

Luke 12:46-47

“The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for them, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut them in two (dichotomeo is the Greek verb; it’s where we get our word dichotomy) and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.”

So is that servant beaten after he’s cut in two or before he’s cut in two? I would think he’d be beaten before he’s cut in two, because after he’s cut in two what’s the point of a beating? Or do you suppose, as most people suppose: He’s cut in two, beaten, sewn back together; cut in two, beaten, sewn back together; cut in two, beaten, sewn back together, etc., etc., for ever and ever without end?

Luke 12:47-48

“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.”

Well that’s a freaky verse, but it can’t be describing what most people call “hell.” I mean there’s obviously an end to the beatings, because some get many blows and some get few blows . . . as if the beatings had a purpose, a *telos*—an end.

Luke 16:48

“But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

So catch your breath and think this through:

1. Those that haven’t heard the law or the gospel (those to whom much has *not* been given), but have disobeyed, will be beaten.
2. And those who have heard, and disobeyed, will be more severely beaten. The only ones that will not be beaten are those that never disobeyed, that is, those that have never sinned.

Scripture is clear: *“All have sinned.”* Therefore, all will be beaten. Only One hasn’t sinned: the One in the clip from *The Passion of the Christ*, described above.

So now, if you’re an American evangelical, like me, you think: *“Hey I get it, because I trust the Lord, I won’t be beaten because He is beaten in my place . . .”* Well, Jesus didn’t say that, and the servants that knew the master’s will, and still disobeyed—which is us—still get beaten, and not

only beaten, beaten most severely. There is nothing in here about, "Say a little prayer in the back of a pamphlet," and you won't get beaten.

According to this parable . . .

ALL will be beaten.

The Pygmies in Africa that never heard the gospel will be beaten.

And the Presbyterians that have read all of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* will be beaten.

Saddam Hussein and Billy Graham both get beaten, if both have sinned.

And for all we know, Billy might get the worst beating, for Saddam may not have known the Lord's will, and Billy did know the Lord's will.

Romans 2:6 "(God) will render to each one according to his works."

(That's not the Old Testament but the New!)

We're not saved by our works.

But God will still render to each one according to his works. What will He render?

Endless torture, or maybe "discipline?"

Well, it seems clear that all will be beaten . . . and maybe, all get cut in two. And maybe, you already feel a bit cut in two. I mean, just reading this didn't you feel a bit cut in two? You thought, "Hey I've got oil in my lamp; I'm excited for the Lord of love to return!" Then you thought, "But crap, I'm a little stressed about that return because He calls me a steward, charged with distributing His stuff to other people. But I call 'His stuff,' 'my stuff,' and I don't like giving it to other people. In fact, rather than giving it to other people, I like beating other people to get it. And I think I got a bit drunk during the Super Bowl (celebrating the fact that we beat the tar out of the Panthers!)"

You feel a bit of a dichotomy within yourself:

There is a self that trusts Love, and "God is love."

And there is a self that does not trust Love and doesn't want Love to come back.

But He's coming back. So when is He coming back?

We've all been to the movies, so we all know that Christ is coming at the "*end of the age*." But according to Scripture, "*the end of the ages*" has already come upon us, who believe (I Corinthians 10:11).

For Christ "*suffered, once for all,*" at the "*end of the ages*" to "*put away sin*" (Hebrews 9:26).

Jesus is the end, so when we meet Him at the cross we arrive at the end. Or the end arrives at us. On the day He was crucified, Jesus said to the High Priest, "*I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man . . . coming on the clouds of heaven*" (Matthew 26:64).

So you don't have to wait to the end of time to get beaten and cut in two. In fact, you might get beaten and cut in two this very day—Valentine's Day. You might think: "What a great parable to pick for Valentine's Day, Peter." Sorry, I didn't map this out. Whatever the case, we will all be beaten. It seems that this Lord beat the hell out of His servant. Will the Lord beat the hell out of

us? Or at least have the hell beaten out of us? Jesus doesn't say that the Lord does the actual *beating*, just the actual cutting in two.

But why would God have us beaten and cut in two?

What's with all the violence?

What does the master want?

Well, this is where the parable really gets weird:

- The listeners would expect a slave to be beaten.
- They would be rather surprised by a master that cut a slave in two, because that's just bad use of a slave.
- But they would've been unable to believe what this master wants. In fact, you probably missed it; it's so strange it didn't even register.

Luke 12:35-44

"Let your waist (osphus: loins) be girded and your lamps burning;"

(That ought to remind you of a similar story Jesus told in Matthew.)

"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed (makarios: happy) are those servants (doulos: slaves) whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat (anaklino: recline. "He will recline them"), and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house (oikodespot: house despot, house ruler) had known what hour the thief would come, he would've watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Then Peter said to him, "Lord, do you speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward (oikonomos: house manager) whom his master (kurios: lord) will make ruler (kurios: lord) over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has."

Wow! Did you catch that? What does the master want?

What Does the Master Want?

1. He wants his servants to want him
2. So that he can serve them—help them
3. So that he can make them master over all his house
4. So the he can make them in His Image

1. He wants His servants to want *Him!*
2. So that He can serve *them*.
3. So that He can make them master over all His things.
4. So He can make them in His own image.

Well, that's been the Master's purpose since Genesis 1: "*Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness and let them have dominion . . . over all the earth.*" You know, if you really had dominion over all creation, you could say to this mountain: "Be taken up and cast into the sea." And your word—your will—would happen. You could speak to the storm and it would stop. You could walk on water and raise the dead. Your will would be entirely free. (But, unless your will agreed with another's will, you'd be entirely alone. And not free to love.)

Well, the Lord wanted Adam to be made in His image to exercise dominion in freedom. And He wanted to be Adam's Help—his Helper. He wanted Adam to want Him. Jesus says, "*Blessed (happy) are the servants that wait for and want the master. Truly the master will gird himself and literally "recline them" and come serve them.*"

In John 13 Jesus literally does this. It's at supper on the night He's betrayed: "*Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand,*" He rose from supper, took off His garments and girded His loins with a towel. Then taking the position of a slave, He began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel. When He got to Peter, Peter protested saying, "You'll never wash my feet." And Jesus said, "*If I don't wash you, you have no part in me.*" See, Peter thought he "*must build the church,*" but Jesus said, "*I will build the church on you.*" See, Peter had an ego and his ego wouldn't allow Jesus to wash his feet. When you truly let the Lord serve you, it annihilates your ego.

Well, it was that night, as Jesus was beaten that Peter's ego was beaten, and when Jesus looked at him, just His gaze, cut Peter in two. Then Jesus appointed Peter ruler of His House—His Church, that together they would rule His House.

So what does the Master want?

1. He wants us to want Him.
2. He wants us to let Him serve us. And He serves us Himself (that night at supper, He served them His body broken and His blood shed). He is our Helper.

3. He wants us to rule as He rules, to love in freedom. He wants to make us in His own image.

In my best moments, that's exactly what I want for my kids.

Late one night, many years ago, a man broke into my daughter's room. He hit her and he held her down in violation of her will. She kicked and screamed until she lost consciousness and then, thankfully he left. We live in a violent world: We ask, "What does it mean?" My daughter can't remember the incident, yet it caused me trauma for years. See? I was that man and I "broke" into her room. (Actually it wasn't her room; it was my room, in my house.) But sometimes, when Elizabeth was two:



She thought she owned the house. She thought she was *oikodespot*, despot, king of the house, and so she viewed me as a thief. So I was the one who broke in and violated her will, because her will was hell. See? Just who it is that being violent and why, really make a difference.

Elizabeth had a very strong will, and it was sometimes a bad will. One day, Elizabeth was angry with Susan, so when Susan bent over to fix the vacuum, Elizabeth snuck up from behind and bit Susan in the behind. She left teeth marks in Susan's behind, so Susan spanked Elizabeth's behind, against Elizabeth's will. She disciplined Elizabeth and so violated her will.

Every now and then, she'd get so angry with her brother Jon, I'd worry for his safety and violate her will. Sometimes Elizabeth would get so angry she'd be a danger to us and a danger to herself. She'd just go into a rage and start beating her brother or slamming her head against the doorknob. And so it happened on about three occasions.

It happened, when the scolding didn't work, the spankings didn't work, and she was totally out of control; I marched into her room, picked her up, put her on the bed, and just lay on top of her until she passed out from sheer exhaustion. That night, each of those nights, I'd be a basket case. I'd lie awake rehearsing in my mind just what I'd say to her counselor in twenty years

when Elizabeth would process her memory of “abuse.” But in the morning (after ten hours of deep sleep) she’d come running into the kitchen and yell, “Hi Daddy!” jump up in my lap, and cover me with kisses. It was like something in her little heart knew: “When I lose control, my Daddy will not lose control of me, and so I love him.”

I don’t think I violate Elizabeth’s will anymore.
That’s because my will is basically her will. She’s an adult.



See? She’s exercising dominion over creation.

Now we’re both adults, or maybe both children in our Father’s house.
Are you an adult or a child?

You know a spoiled child is a child that thinks they are an adult.
A spoiled child is a child that hasn’t been disciplined.
A spoiled child is addicted to gifts and can no longer love the giver of the gifts.
A spoiled child takes “the good” but no longer surrenders to the One who *is* Good.
A spoiled child thinks they can possess Love and so can’t surrender to Love and know Love.
A spoiled child wills what he or she wants, but can no longer want what he or she wills.
A spoiled child wills to be free, but is enslaved to his own will.

If you think you’re an adult, if you think you have “rights” and deserve “respect,” but feel very alone, afraid, and find yourself to be easily offended, I bet you’re a spoiled child. I bet every adult who thinks he or she is an adult is actually a spoiled child.

You know, I’ve heard people say, “I know we have free will and so I know God will never violate my will.” Well, I hope God violates my will because my will is sin, and sin is hell. I hope He crucifies my will and gives me a new will, a free will.

A spoiled child wills his own hell. He wills to be the absolute sole ruler of his own empty house and someone needs to violate his will. See? It’s not your will that saves you. I think it’s your will that damns you. It’s God’s will that saves you from your own will. In other words, it’s grace that saves you from sin. And sometimes grace takes the form of discipline: “It was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved;” that’s discipline. If you never discipline a child, you condemn that child to a miserable and lonely existence.

Proverbs 23:13 is the most politically incorrect verse in all of Scripture,

“Do not withhold discipline from a child. If you beat him with a rod he will not die. If you beat him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”

Maybe that’s because his soul has become Sheol. So, *“unless you lose your soul (psyche-life) you’ll never find it.”*

And now let me say, I never beat any of my kids with the rod. In our culture, I think that’s abuse. Nothing is as disturbing as child abuse. Yet nothing is as comforting as the discipline of love. *“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want,”* writes David. *“He makes me recline in green pastures . . . Thy rod (that’s discipline) and thy staff, they comfort me.”* They comfort me! They comfort me. *“He prepares the table before me, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

His house—My house.

The author of Hebrews quotes Proverbs, and he writes to Christians being beaten and abused by governing authorities (so not just two-year-olds getting spanked, but grown Christians being martyred).

Hebrews 12:6-8

For the Lord disciplines the ones he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

So these folks are being beaten and abused by evil people. But actually the Lord of love, their Father, is disciplining them.

If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children (bastards) and not sons . . .

Hebrews 12:10-12

[Our earthly fathers] disciplined us for a short time as it best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness

(His holiness is a great banquet called love.)

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (that’s faith) to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees . . .

Do you see what this means?

At times you may be abused and violated by this world . . . (You already knew that.)

But you are always being disciplined by Love.

See? That’s not bad news, that’s the very best news . . .

I mean, you already knew you suffered. Right?

You already knew you were getting beat up, but you've wondered, "Why am I getting beat? And Who's doing the beating?" When you were younger you thought you could stop it, but you can't stop it. Maybe change it, but not stop it. Maybe you thought it was the Democrats, or the Republicans, or the liberals, or the conservatives, or the Syrians, or the Presbyterians Or maybe your dad, or your mom, or some abuser who did unspeakable things, or maybe the devil himself And don't get me wrong; they may have intended it for evil, and what they did may have been absolute, and you should fight it, report it and never surrender to it But the Lord is not *it*. He's using it that you would surrender to Him. Joseph said, "*You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.*"

God doesn't will evil, but He intends for each of us to battle evil and surrender to Good.

The Lord works all things together for good . . . particularly the beatings.
If the Lord doesn't beat the hell out of us . . . He certainly arranges for all the beatings.
If you think you're "grown-up," you assume that your will is good, and what violates it is evil. But what if your will is evil? Then maybe what violates it is the Good.

See?

Maybe the Lord beats the hell out of us, because He doesn't want the hell in us.

And what's the hell?

Well...

Isn't it the belief that we are our own creator, savior and redeemer—our own helper?

Isn't it the belief that we are the despot, (the absolute lord) of our own lonely house?

Isn't it our own arrogant refusal to surrender to Love, and God is Love?

If God is beating the hell out of you it's only to create His heaven within you. It's His discipline.

And I know what some of you are thinking:

"But Peter, this doesn't feel like discipline . . . and if it continues, I'll die!"

Yes, you will.

Death is the final violation of your will . . . and maybe you forgot: Death is discipline.

He said, "*The day you eat of it, you will die*" (Genesis 2:17). Well, this is that day, and each of us must die. But that's not a bad thing. It's the very best thing!¹

Death is discipline: so you must lose your life to find it.

But that's not bad news That's the best news.

You will die to your own self-centered will and rise in His will, climb up on His lap, and cover Him with kisses, overjoyed that your house is His house. And His house is your house.

You know, Hades is not for those who have truly died. It's for those whose bodies may have died, but their psyches refuse to die: They refuse to die to self, so they refuse to live, in the house of Love, the economy of Love.

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien asked, "Which punishments of God are not also blessings?"

So in this story,
I don't think Jesus is describing endless torture for people that He refuses to love.
I think He's describing discipline for servants that He will not stop loving.
So Jesus describes what Love wants, then, describes Love's discipline of those that don't want Love.

I can't explain all of this, but I can at least point and say, "WOW!"

Luke 16:45-46

"But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two (dichotomeo) and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Literally: "he will cut him in two and put the portion of him—his portion—with the un-trustful").

It's like you are a dichotomy:

So a portion of you trusts Love, that is, has faith in God.

And that's not your portion . . .that's God's doing, God's creation, God's portion.

And a portion of you does not trust Love, that is, does not have faith in God.

And that's your portion . . .that's you're doing, your creation.

You are a false self and a true self, an old man and a new man; you contain your will and God's will.

And: *"The word of God is living and active sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12).

Luke 16:47-48

And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required, and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask for more.

I bet you come to church feeling beaten. I mean you come to church needing help.

To some of you, *"much has been given"* and to others *"less."* And so you can't judge another's discipline from the outside. You don't know what they've been given, what demons they face, what wounds they carry. And you don't know what God is creating them to be. To make a Saint Paul requires a lot of beatings. *"For where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."*

Well, you come feeling beat, and then you hear the Word and it cuts.

You confess your sin—your old will—and you receive God's will. It's a banquet of grace! It's a body broken and blood shed. It's Jesus.

Did you know that Scripture claims: “*Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered*” (Hebrews 5:8-9)? Even Jesus is disciplined. He was disciplined, though He did nothing wrong. He suffered the worst of beatings because He chose to suffer *our* beatings and help us surrender our sin. In the garden, He took on our will, that He might surrender our will and give us His will, God’s will. Your sin is your portion. And Jesus is God’s portion given to you.

I cannot adequately explain it, but I think all our suffering is the discipline of Love. That’s not bad news. It’s the very best news! It means God violates your bad will to give you His good will. He violates your hell, to give you His heaven. And you don’t have to wait to be disciplined; you can surrender to it right now. It’s how God causes us to want Him...so we would surrender to His Love...so we would be made in His image and bear the fruit of His life, the Fruit.

See? There is one other thing that the Lord wants: He wants communion with His Bride. This story appears to be a version of the story Jesus must’ve told several times. We preached on Matthew’s version in September; it was a great sermon titled “Foolish Virgins.” You’ll remember it was about virgins who lit their lamps looking for the bridegroom. We realized a “foolish virgin” is one who doesn’t know what the bridegroom wants. So the bridegroom shuts her out of the wedding chamber in outer darkness, for he will not rape her and violate love.

I shared a story about a night long ago when I returned unexpectedly from a trip in the middle of the night. My bride thought I was a thief, and she expected to be raped. But when she heard my voice, and knew it was me, what she thought was hell turned into heaven. She surrendered to love, and I filled her with my life. In that message I said, “The Great Bridegroom refuses to rape us.” But He will arrange for the destruction of our city and shut us out in outer darkness for a time.

In the words of Hosea, “He will lead us through the valley of Achor, (the valley of trouble)” to break our pride and romance us to surrender, to break our bad will, and He romances His goodwill into us. (Hosea 2) He violates our evil, but He will not violate love—He is Love.

In our story, the master is returning from a marriage and commentators say, “It can’t be the marriage of the Lamb because he is returning to his house.” And yet His people are His house. They say the servants can’t be the bride because they’re servants; they submit.

I grew up in the 60s and 70s when everyone was renouncing traditional marriage because it required submission.



One year ago today, these posters were everywhere: “Fifty Shades of Gray - Valentine’s Day.” I read much of the first book. It’s about a woman who’s tempted to sign a contract to submit to

discipline in order to experience pleasure. It sold 125 million copies, primarily to women who find the concept attractive. There is so much that's wrong and un-biblical about the book, primarily the idea of sex outside of the covenant (or contract) of marriage. But the thrill of submitting your will to the will of a covenant partner, who loves you more than you love yourself, well, I don't think that's one of the things wrong with the book.

I'm old now, and I just find it fascinating that, as a society, we rejected submission, and now we lust for submission. Maybe we all long for someone to whom we could submit ourselves and thus lose ourselves because being stuck in ourselves is hell! And we all *long* for heaven.

Actually, a marriage license is a contract to submit. I talked Susan into signing one thirty-five years ago. It's been the cause of most of the pain in her life, *and* it's produced the greatest joys, and all four children. We're rather old now, Susan and I, and *Fifty Shades of Gray* really isn't our thing, but there is great joy in submission. I read the plot summaries of the next two books in Wikipedia, and it turns out that Anastasia (which means resurrection) and Christian Gray do sign a contract, not the original contract, but a marriage contract. They both submit to the discipline of Love and bear the fruit of Life—children.

Christ is the Bridegroom, and we are His Bride. He won't violate Love, but He will arrange all things that we will surrender to Love: He is Love. Obedience is surrender to the discipline of Love. And it's not bad news; it's good news. I used to hate the word obedience until I read this quote. CS Lewis wrote, "Obedience is an erotic necessity."

Clip from *Catch and Release*

[A woman waits in a room. A man follows her, closing the door behind him. The man turns to face the woman, and she suddenly slaps him. He just looks at her, stunned. She breathes heavily, staring into his eyes, and reaches up to slap him again. He grabs her hand and stops her. She reaches with her other hand to slap him and he grabs that hand. He then pushes both of her hands up against the wall by her head. They stand there just breathing and looking in each other's eyes. Then she suddenly leans forward and kisses him as he continues to hold her hands against the wall. They kiss deeply, and the scene closes with her fingers curling around his against the wall.]

You've all seen scenes like that a thousand times. She slapped him. He holds her down. They both surrender to love and kiss. For some that's entirely terrifying because someone, who did not love you, abused you. (So I give you complete freedom to forget the last half of this sermon.) But it seems that most find it thrilling. How come? Well, isn't it the idea that there is someone stronger than you that truly loves you? So even if you will yourself to hell, they will violate your evil; they will romance you to heaven? They will violate your old will, and give you a new will. It's the discipline of love, and God is Love.

I doubt that I've explained this well, but once I experienced it well. It was my Damascus Road experience that I've shared many times, and so won't share all of it now. It happened almost twenty years ago when I was feeling really beat up. I had told God I was "leaving the ministry" because He spoke to others, and He didn't speak to me. It was that day I actually heard Him speak – audibly.

He revealed that I'd gone into the ministry out of anger. It felt like He took a knife and cut a stone from my chest as I lay on the floor, and I wept for hours. But it wasn't bad news; it was good news. I praised Him for the heart surgery. That night, during the worship service, He

literally pinned me to the floor; He held me down. It felt like one million volts of electricity coursed through my body. I couldn't help but praise Him, for I saw He constantly, completely, and continuously loved me!

My arms were up in praise and then they began to feel as if they would break. And I thought "He's gonna break my arms! He's gonna break my arms! God's gonna break my arms. He's breaking my arms!" It sounds terrifying, but I was terribly, terribly, terribly happy. I knew He'd stop if I just said the word, but I didn't want to say the word, it was ecstasy. I saw that He was, like, everywhere talking to me; and then He told me to stop doubting His Love. He didn't break my arms, but I knew He could, and He would if I needed it. And I think that's the most encouraging thing that's ever happened to me. Something in my heart knew: If I lose control, my Daddy will not lose control of me. It took a few weeks to put it all together, but I realized that I always used to pray, "God, I don't hear you very well, so if I'm out of your will, just break my arms." And that was the day I told Him I was leaving the ministry because He didn't care for me or talk to me."

See? God disciplined me, and I'm starting to realize He's always disciplining me.

You know every time I suffer it's because something or someone has violated my will, but God is sovereign - so in the end, only God violates my will. He violates my will; He breaks my will so I would surrender to His will.

So what does it mean when you suffer violence? I think it means that even though you will yourself to hell, there is a Someone stronger than you that wills you to heaven, and that's not bad news; it's the best news. He violates your bad will to give you a new will—His will—Jesus.

Communion

So He said, "This is my body broken for you. Take and eat and do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way after supper and having given thanks, He took this cup and He said, "This is the covenant, the contract, in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me."

Don't run from this. I understand why people run from this. But, run *to* this. Because your Lord is Love, and His discipline is Life. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel and live.

Benediction

So do you see? God's discipline is not bad news; it's really good news. So, why do we come to church? Well, maybe because we feel beat up in this world. And we realize we need help. We come to this place and hear the word preached. It's really just a statement—news about who God is and what He has done. It cuts us and we realize: I have not loved my enemies; I have not distributed the Lord's things to the Lord's people. There is so much in me that is antithetical to Him, and then you confess your sin. You come to the table and you confess. You give God your portion, and He gives you His portion—Grace. And then you say, "I kind of want to love my enemy. I kind of want to give the portion to others. And you go out into the world with your lamps lit and your loins girded, and you say, "I love the Lord. I want the Lord to come. I want the Lord to discipline me. I want Him to fix me because I know He is good, and He is making me in His own image. And He is LOVE! And Love is an endless party."

So surrender to the Lord's discipline. And if you are one of those people who says, "But He disciplines me more than anyone else, everything's bad etc. etc. etc. Well, maybe you are a Saint Paul. Maybe you have challenges that I can't begin to understand. And God is revealing glories to you that I couldn't even begin to know. But you are going to tell me about them at the Great Banquet that will last forever and ever! So surrender to the Lord's discipline.

Believe the Gospel, and surrender to the Gospel because it's good.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.