

What Manner of Love

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos 3:3

This passage has been the text for many sermons in which virtually all, if not all, present doctrine as the evil which causes division among Christians. The typical approach suggests doctrine makes it hard or impossible for Christians to walk or to work together. One illustration that has been used many times speaks of a 2000 square mile area in China in which only two Christian families lived. One family believed in water baptism by immersion and the other in water baptism by sprinkling. As a result they never met or had fellowship together. The conclusion drawn from this human illustration, whether it is true or not, is that doctrine is so divisive Christians should seek for areas of agreement and avoid areas of doctrinal disagreement.

This suggested meaning neither parses the verse nor deals with the context, yet many so-called Christian organizations urge their speakers to not bring up doctrinal subjects so as not to offend someone in the audience. Of course doctrine is divisive, **it divides truth from error!** Is it not our mission, our responsibility, to proclaim God's truth rather than dish out drivel that neither offends nor nourishes those who listen?

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

1Ti 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

The text in Amos is, "Can two walk together except they be agreed." The word "walk" is an imperfect, not speaking of the beginning or the ending of the action but only a walk with no end in view. Nothing in the word itself indicates the purpose nor the subject of the walk. The word "except" is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning the walk has been totally negated but it is followed by the word "agreed" in the perfect tense speaking of a new walk that has now been arranged by decree and design. A walk with every detail decreed, designed and controlled by God, a walk that never ends.

Our Lord declared that the Scriptures are those which speak of Him just as this verse does. It is not speaking of doctrinal difficulties but of the wonder of His grace in that He has ordained for us a never-ending walk with Him. Here is a beautiful statement of God's love for us in His decree of redemption to send His son to die in our place that our walk with Him, which had been broken by sin, be established by His decree never to be broken again. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God:"

Ro 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Before we look at the context of the Amos passage, let's pause for a moment to think about our God. We as Christians believe in the one and only God, the sovereign monarch of eternity who spoke the worlds into existence. He is the one who said "Let there be light" and there was light. He swept the dust from His workshop and placed the stars in their orbits. He created the heavens with billions of galaxies and billions of stars in each galaxy. Words are not able to express the majesty, the power and the sovereignty of the one almighty eternal God who created the heavens and the earth. We understand fully

the words of the psalmist, “*What is man that thou art mindful of him?*” and find it almost impossible to believe that we are to Him the most precious and the most important of all His works. The center of His constant care, concern and control.

For many, the glory and majesty of the sovereign God who created the heavens and the earth has blinded their eyes to the grace of this God who not only is the one true God but is actually decreeing and controlling every single event in His creation as well as every detail and event in our lives. Is it reasonable to believe that the God of eternity who so loved us that He gave His only begotten son to become man, be made sin and die as our substitute so that we are made the righteousness of God in Him; that the God who paid such a price, the death of His son, for us would leave us to our own devices? The same God who deals with the immensity of his creation is the God who numbered the hairs of our heads. From the movements of far-off galaxies to the fall of the sparrow our God is in absolute control of every event and every detail in His creation as well as every event and every detail of our lives. Stop and think for a moment - it cost God nothing to create billions of stars but because of His love for us, it cost Him the life of His only begotten son to redeem us. It is inconceivable that God, after paying such a price for us, would leave the simplest detail in our lives to fickle fate, the wiles of the devil or the decisions of our finite minds.

Consider the words of John Calvin:

*This rather is the solace of the faithful, in their adversity, that every thing which they endure is by the ordination and command of God...He to whom heaven and earth belong, and whose nod all creatures must obey, is fully able to reward the homage which they pay to Him, and they can rest secure in the protection of Him to whose control everything that could do them harm is subject, by whose authority, Satan, with all his furies and engines, is curbed as with a bridle, and on whose will everything adverse to our safety depends. In this way, and in no other, can the immoderate and superstitious fears, excited by the dangers to which we are exposed, be calmed or subdued...First, then, let the reader remember that the providence we mean is not one by which the Deity, sitting idly in heaven, looks on at what is taking place in the world, but one by which He, as it were, holds the helms and overrules all events, **single events are so regulated by God, and all events so proceed from His determinate counsel, that nothing happens fortuitously.** Calvin*

Or of Benjamin Dwight:

In no respect is the piety of modern Christians more weak than in the habitual possession of a serene, uplifting sense of an ever-felt, though unseen, God, waiting to bestow himself, with His gifts, and infinitely beyond them, upon all His creatures...The fact of God's providence The sentiment of this great, delightful truth is the very aroma of every page of the Bible. No other doctrine exhales its sweetness so unfailingly, from every part of it, to the gladdened sense of him who is “the friend of God.” Benjamin Dwight

Back to the context of our passage in Amos:

Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Verse four

The scientist or the evolutionist looking at the facts may propose the hypothesis that after thousands of years some younger lions began to realize that their parents and their ancestors were skinny,

emaciated and starving lions. These younger lions, at least some of them, might reach the conclusion that this was true because the lions were frightening the prey away by roaring. The smart thing would be not to roar so as not to scare their prey and that way they would have plenty to eat. So over the years more and more younger lions did not roar until after they had taken their prey. As a result, of course because of the survival of the fittest, lions no longer roared until after they had taken their prey. Anyone who believes this is a fool. The hunting lion does not roar until he has taken his prey because God created and designed him that way. God is pointing out in the context that our walk in every detail is designed and decreed by God and He is involved in every detail of our lives and the environment in which we live more than He is with lions. Not only has He pointed out in this verse the lion doesn't roar until he has taken prey but this is also true of the young lion still in the den; not something he learned, not something taught nor acquired, but instilled by the sovereign God. He ordained our walk as well as that of the lion.

In the same way, there is design and control in the fall and capture of the bird, verse five, or the warning trumpet blown in the city, verse six. All of these things are by the design and purpose of the sovereign God, even the evil in the city. We can rest in the grandeur of this truth that in a much greater way all things, every detail and every event in our lives is by the design and in the control of our loving heavenly Father. Knowing this, is it not strange that we act like the heathen?

Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. Jer 10:2

It is as common for Christians as well as for non-Christians to speak of "mother nature" as the cause of storms, floods, etc. Is it reasonable to believe that the God who numbered the hairs on our head allows this "mother nature" to determine the thunderstorm or the tornado? Is nature some sort of God? Is it the normal results of fixed laws of creation? No! Nature is that which God has established! Nature is not what man has decided or observed over many years, is not the result of established laws of the universe but is the operation of the sovereign God in our environment. Not a raindrop falls nor a wind blows but by the decree and control of our God.

*Nature being more properly the order which has been established by God, in matters which are so very important, and in regard to which special reverence is due, **it does harm to confound the Deity with the inferior operations of his hands.** Calvin*

It bears repeating: it cost the sovereign God nothing to create billions of stars but it cost Him the life of His only begotten son to redeem us. The Lord made this clear when He spoke to the man sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" and was charged with blasphemy. Remember His simple reply, "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" It cost Him nothing to say "take up thy bed and walk" but it cost Him everything to say "thy sins be forgiven thee."

In all of His vast creation we who belong to the Lord, who are His own and cost Him the most, are the most precious to Him and are always under His control and direction. There is more scripture, in fact the major content of God's word speaks of his interest, direction and control of every single event in His creation, from the rise and fall of nations to the fall of the sparrow. To really grasp this truth, to believe and trust in His care, control, protection and direction in all things, every event big or small, every illness, affliction, sorrow or pain results in the "peace that passes understanding." How much we miss when we put our trust in something other than our God; for example stocks, bonds, money, or job.

It is tempting to list hundreds of passages, **more than on any other subject in His Word**, on the sovereignty of God in His creation and in the lives of His own but we will list only a few that we trust will spur the reader in his study of the Word to “behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us” as he reads of God’s design, direction and control in our lives and in all of His creation:

Exodus 4:11 *And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?*

De 32:39 *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.*

Nehemiah 9:6; *Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.*

Job 12:9-10; *Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*

Psalms 46:9; *Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God:*

Ps 135:6 *Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*

Ps 139:14 *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*

Proverbs 16:1 *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, [is] from the LORD.*

Proverbs 16:33; *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

Na 1:3-5 *the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.*

Isaiah 45:7 *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*

Da 4:17 & 35 *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men...And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

Matthew 6:26-32; *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into*

barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Rom 8:28-32 we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?

Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Behold what manner of the love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. 1 John 3:1