

Exhortation: Do we love much?

Now as we all gather around this table to remember, to recognise, to further appreciate and thankfully acknowledge the love of our Heavenly Father for each one of us brethren and sisters. Once more then we see the love of our God shown to us through the giving of his beloved son in the bread and wine upon the table before us.

Romans Chapter 5 and verse 8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”.

Each of then brethren and sisters at some point in time past had the love of God, introduced, presented and demonstrated to us personally. Either by an individual, a family member, a friend, a colleague or even by the blessing of growing up in a Christadelphian home. However it occurred the love of God as commended in the gospel message impacted us personally and elicited a response in each of us.

Indeed by virtue of our being here today, each of us show that that same love understood, is still producing a response in every one of us gathered in fellowship together around these emblems. But the question is what is that response and what is its motivation? Of course only we can answer personally for our selves.

For is our love yet that genuine and unfeigned response, that we each showed at the time of our baptisms? Or perhaps our love for the truth has morphed and become like that of the Pharisees in the first century, which loved the esteem of their peers and the people in general? Whose love was not for Almighty God, but for their traditions and its privileges?

Now even if our love is indeed genuine brethren and sisters, what state is it in? Is our individual love for what has been done for us in Christ weakening? As time goes on, and still our Master has not appeared, so that we might ask, where is the promise of his coming? Have we brethren and sisters allowed our love to diminish or escape? As heat does from a hot drink left sitting on the side, because of the pressures of modern life and the lusts of other things crowding in to squeeze out the things of God and the truth. So finally like those in the first century, whom the Master warned in the Olivet prophecy our love has waxed cold.

Or rather brethren and sisters has our love grown over the period of time we have been in the truth, however long or short that has individually been. Has our love, grown deeper? Has it matured? Is our love of greater intensity, than when we were first baptised?

How would you measure your love for our Heavenly Father and for his beloved Son? At this time, as we sit around the bread and wine? We all know the standard set forth in the scriptures of truth.

Matthew Chapter 22 and verses 35 – 40 (T)

“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

None of us would sit here and say that our knowledge has not grown for example in the last two years. We all know much more about the scriptures, with its characters and events, than we did just two short years ago? Likewise with our faith, we know that our faith is increased through the hearing of the word and by placing our trust in our Heavenly Father and his promises.

But love is not so easy brethren and sisters to measure, yet it is something we are exhorted to increase in and to stimulate not only within our selves, but also in others.

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 7 & 8 (T)

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”.

Indeed first Corinthians chapter thirteen in the first few verses, makes it abundantly clear brethren and sisters that if we do not have real divine “love”, as the motivation for everything we are and do, then it is to no profit whatsoever in the final analysis. Rather when we stand before our Lord at the judgement we shall hear these chilling words “***I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity***”.

Now as we read elsewhere in Corinthians “*but if any man love God, the same is known of him*”. The Master never disputes those that say “*Lord, Lord*” that they performed their works and accomplishments, rather he points out that he did not know them personally, because whatever their motivation was, it was not divine love. That is why he states “*I never knew you*”.

The point here is simply this – to be known by our Heavenly Father and to be acknowledged by his Son in that day, we must love God. Not as we think and feel, but as He has set forward in the word of life and as our beloved Master has modelled for us in the emblems upon the table.

Let us recall the example of Saul of Tarsus who undoubtedly loved God and thinking he was doing God a great service persecuted and consented to the death of those in Christ.

Galatians Chapter 1 and verses 13 – 16

“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me”.

Saul would have pointed to his great work here, as proof of his love for Almighty God, therefore brethren and sisters let us beware that we do not fall into the same trap in our work for the truth.

What then is the key to us having the right motivation to our love for our Heavenly Father in Christ?

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 10 & 19

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love him, because he first loved us”.

The key is that our love must come from our appreciation, understanding and gratitude for the sacrifice we have come to remember once more and yet once less, before our Lord comes. Any other reason, as the basis for our love for God and we are in danger of like Saul and many others down through history we will *have “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge”*.

It is this heartfelt response then brethren and sisters to the grace of God extended to us in Christ that motivates us to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and to consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

This same point is brought home to us in the second Epistle of Peter. The Eternal Spirit highlights the great calling we have been given and then shows to us the response we should have in developing our characters to be like our beloved Lord. By diligently adding to our faith another seven qualities, the last of which is love. Then we read these words:

2nd Peter Chapter 1 and verses 9 – 11 (T)

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

So then a disciple’s failure to respond and to continue to grow in faith and love and all these other important characteristics is because they have lost perspective. The Spirit describes those that so lack as being:

- Blind
- Unable to see afar off
- Forgetful

Do these terms describe any of us, here brethren and sisters? Is this true of you and me? Again only we can answer for ourselves.

For one so blind, then their perspective on the things of God and the truth is clouded with pride, as this word implies in the Greek. As a result of this they have no eye of faith in that they cannot see afar off. This inability to see properly is due to the

development of myopic or near sighted vision. Where they would only be concerned with living in the present and have no future orientation towards the kingdom.

Finally those in this state have forgotten that which we have come to remember, the idea here is not that we have forgotten the event. But rather they now fail practically to take into account in their lives of the true meaning and significance of what had been achieved for them in Christ's sacrifice.

Thus through spiritual amnesia they no longer live in the light either of the Master's example and sacrifice, as living sacrifices themselves nor do they live in the light of the Master's imminent return.

What we actually have here brethren and sisters is a progression we must avoid at all costs, which begins with pride and ends in amnesia. Now lest you think brethren and sisters that this can never happen to me, then let this sad simple everyday example give you pause for thought.

Many people within marriage unfortunately end up following this same simple progression. Because of some issue between them they become blind to the love that was theirs and this distorts both the present, they're past memories and any future hope. Thus they end up completely at odds with one another; hurt and so depart in divorce. Let us take careful heed of the Eternal Spirit's warning here through the Apostle Peter, lest we forget we have been purged from our old sins.

Our redemption through the Master's sacrifice must be personally real to us brethren and sisters. We must not let it become, just an acknowledged fact in our lives. Because we are called upon to live out the atonement of our Lord in our own daily lives.

1st John Chapter 3 and verse 16

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”.

Or how about it in more concrete terms within our daily relationships, such as marriage, as its portrayed in Ephesians chapter five.

Ephesians Chapter 5 and verses 22 – 25

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”.

There is nothing easy about our own individual loving response to our Heavenly Father's love commended to us through the giving of his beloved Son to die that death upon the stake. Let us remember it was not easy for the Father to give him up, neither was it easy for our Lord to submit to his Father's will.

Now since these things are not easy brethren and sisters to keep always at the forefront of our minds, as we go through daily life with all its distractions and its ups and downs.

What can we do to keep our perspective, especially so much the more, as we see the day approaching. Well there are two things one negative and one positive, which should inhabit our consciousness enough on a daily basis brethren and sisters. Let us deal with the negative exhortation first.

Luke Chapter 7 and verses 36 – 39 (T)

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner”.

Now brethren and sisters, which of the two people in this incident do you most identify with? It is all right, I won’t ask for a show of hands to each one.

Have we indeed become so religious that we identify both individually and even, ecclesially with the Pharisee here? Or do we still each remember our own sinfulness and identify with the previously forgiven woman at Jesus’ feet?

Does our sinfulness move us brethren and sisters as it moved this woman? For she stands here as a type of the ecclesia here. An ecclesia that is neither proud nor short sighted. Let us recall what our sinfulness cost our Heavenly Father and our beloved Lord, it was no small price:

1st Peter Chapter 1 and verses 18 – 20

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”.

Let us remember brethren and sisters that our sins are a personal offence to our Heavenly Father, there is nothing abstract about our sin.

As Joseph protested to Potiphar’s wife, *how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

Luke Chapter 7 and verses 39 – 43 (T)

“Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged”.

Which of these two debtors best describes you personally brethren and sisters? Indeed, which of them best describes me? Are you a fifty pence or a five hundred pence kind of person?

Now if I am brutally honest, I would say I am more often like Simon here, than this woman for my shame. Yes I am only too aware of my own sinfulness, as indeed I am sure we all are. Especially as we are confronted here at the memorial table by the one who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth. Equally I am indeed aware and acknowledge how great is my own sinfulness before my Heavenly Father.

But nevertheless there appears to be in me an in built callousness against it moving me into action, as it moved this woman. Is this indeed a common experience among us brethren and sisters? Are you likewise brethren and sisters plagued by this hardened attitude to your sin, as Simon was here?

Yet this unidentified woman stands here as a type of how we ought to respond appropriately to the forgiveness, we have each, received in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Luke Chapter 7 and verses 44 – 48 (T)

*“And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. **Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven”**.*

Now which of these two characters in this story best portrays brethren and sisters, how we individually relate to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have we not all come this morning to remember him with thankfulness and expectation in bread and wine?

Let this simple truth spoken by Christ to Simon – jar you, as they did me brethren and sisters. *“Wherefore I say unto thee to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little”*. Do we indeed love little brethren and sisters? Is this true of you and I?

Since each one of us have been so forgiven, while we were yet sinners, how much have we each loved in response?

There is so much more in this incident than we have time to consider now. Brethren and sisters if your looking for a topic either for meditation or conversation over the coming week. Then this exchange between the woman, the Master and Simon the Pharisee is well worthy of your time and effort.

Now our remembrance of our Lord’s sacrifice and the redemption achieved is not limited to the past only in terms of how much we each have been forgiven. But also importantly brethren and sisters this memorial points positively forward to the blessings, which our Heavenly Father will yet bestow upon those redeemed. Thus our

perspective on these things is also coloured by our longing, our desire for the kingdom of God.

These great and precious promises vouchsafe for us in the one we have come to remember in bread and wine. Should likewise elicit a powerful loving response in each and every one of us brethren and sisters in gratitude and humility. For like the patriarch Jacob we must acknowledge that we are *“not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servants”*.

How then are we to show our loving response to that, which our Heavenly Father has done through his Son and will yet do through him? Well again the Spirit through the Apostle John instructs us:

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 11 & 20

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

As we now come brethren and sisters to partake of the emblems in remembrance of the great love wherewith he loved us. Let take heed that *“love is a verb”, therefore “let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”*.

I give you this challenge brethren and sisters to spend ten minutes at least two mornings this coming week or in the evening if you’re a night person. To firstly think of at least five ways you can show love to your brethren and sisters in this coming week and then carry out those actions. Make sure you record what you have done, so you can build upon it, if given the opportunity.

For in the bread before us brethren and sisters we clearly see **the bread**, which speaks here of the love of our Heavenly Father in Christ, expressed in his word. That word, which is able to transform and renew our minds and characters to love one another, as he himself, has loved us.

Then with the wine it clearly speaks to us of the outworking of that word in a life poured out in loving service, invested into others. This is supremely modelled for us in the Master’s sacrifice, which we are to remember now.

Finally can I leave you with these words, which form part of a prayer by the Apostle Paul for the brethren and sisters in Thessalonica, this was his most earnest wish and desire for them?

1st Thessalonians Chapter 3 and verses 12 & 13

“The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”.

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