

West Bromwich

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Title: Learning to love in deed & in truth

Readings 1st John 3 & 4

In 1st John Chapter 3 and at verse 18

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”.

This verse brethren and sisters exhorts each and every one of us to manifest our love for our Heavenly Father and our beloved Master in a very real and active sense one towards another. The verse is telling us that actions speak louder than words, thus we are to be both doers of the word and doers of the work.

Yet **note** the end of the verse where we have two qualifications; we are firstly exhorted to be active, rather than passive and secondly that action is to be *“in truth”*. Now there are two ideas contained within this phrase *“in truth”*. The first is that any loving action we perform must be done with sincerity, out of our unfeigned love for our brethren. Secondly we find that these righteous deeds performed are actually a direct result of the truth’s affect within our own lives. In other words what we have here in these loving acts performed is the truth we believe bearing fruit in our lives to the advantage of others and to the glory of our God.

Now if we return to the first half of the verse we find that our love then brethren and sisters is to progress beyond either the stage of *“word”* and of *“tongue”*. The word *“word”* here is actually the Greek word *“logos”* and gives us the idea of a thought, of intention or a plan to perform some loving act on behalf of another. Whereas the word *“tongue”* as you imagine speaks of vocalizing that intention out loud to yourself or to others, possibly even to the Father in prayer.

Thus our Heavenly Father desires brethren and sisters that our actions in love go beyond mere good intentions and vocalized promises of help.

Yet my dear brethren and sisters how difficult this is for us if we are truly honest with ourselves. For we live in a fast paced age with such complicated and busy lives that it is difficult for us to react spontaneously to such needs. Indeed if we are not careful, it is possible for us to see such events that require an immediate response as intrusions into our lives that are to be rather avoided.

How often have we heard about a situation or problem with a brother or sister and feel we ought to lend a hand, but due to other commitments we can never find the time or we simply forget about it until it is too late. Thus our ability to manifest “*love in deed and in truth*” is greatly hindered by the practicalities of our modern lives, never mind our own selfish nature.

So then brethren and sisters having had the thought, the good intention to do something in love for brother X or sister Y, as we have perceived the need? Now that need could be anything from a kind word, specific, practical help, a card or a telephone call. Yet due to the circumstances of life and our forgetful nature that good intention or even that vocalized intention either in prayer, to ourselves or even to another the action has never managed to come to fruition.

For indeed we find that “*the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*”. Indeed on top of this we have another problem:

In Galatians Chapter 5 and at verse 17 we read

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”.

Thus our difficulty very often is not in *having the intention or even being able to vocalize it in order to make a concrete plan of action*, but our problem is in allocating the time to perform that which we have intended. Do you not marvel brethren and sisters that our Heavenly Father is never in a hurry and yet is never late? He is always exactly on time. The same is true of our beloved Master, do you know that someone analyzed the Eternal Spirit’s record of the Master’s life through Mark and found that it was made up seemingly of 70% of interruptions into the Lord Jesus Christ’s daily schedule?

Our beloved Master never failed to answer those seeming interruptions into his life brethren and sisters. Undoubtedly he saw them as opportunities for service to his Father. So then as we look back at:

1st John Chapter 3 and verse 18

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”.

What we find at the very beginning of the verse is this lovely phrase “*my little children*” a term of loving endearment by the Eternal Spirit through the Apostle John. The word “*children*” there indicates one yet immature in the things of truth and in the context of this verse it speaks of one not fully able to love in the active and practical manner required by the Father.

Now this is a position that each of us finds ourselves in brethren and sisters. We are all spiritually minded but not yet mature in Christ. Now the difference between spirituality and maturity in Christ is this? Maturity is the final goal. It is what our Heavenly Father is aiming at, for each of us to be a grownup, mature, and experienced saint. Spirituality then is the process by which one attains maturity. Our maturity in Christ is produced through time spent in fellowship, in personal relationship with our Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and one’s brethren and sisters.

It may well be that this phrase “*little children*” here is directing our attention to that of our Heavenly Father in how he loves and of course towards our beloved Master who manifested this love in full maturity, as we see in the emblems before us upon the table.

Are we being directed here brethren and sisters that we might learn to cast off our concept of time, which hems us in and stunts the manifestation our faith and love. The Nigerians have a proverb about westerners being bound to the gods on their wrists (*watch*) one look and they are off at break neck speed elsewhere. Now it is true to say we are ruled by the clock, whether we realize it or not brethren and sisters.

Should we not then be trying to counter this temporal god of time, by developing an eternal perspective to life that sees such loving needs, as occurring at precisely the right time, for us to act to the glory of the Father?

Let us then brethren and sisters try to gain this eternal perspective of our beloved Master with regards to our good intentions and our vocalizations of love that they may more and more become practical actions in our lives. Especially as we see beyond the temporal to the eternal things of that which is shortly about to come to pass in the earth at our Lord's return.

Look forward now brethren and sisters to verse 19

“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him”.

This verse forms the outworking of being increasingly able to perform those good intentions and vocalizations of love into practice in our daily lives. **Notice carefully** the two positive results of this increasing ability to manifest love properly after the divine example. Firstly we have perceivably evidence that we are indeed in the truth and of and are not reprobates and that the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed in us. Secondly we find that *“our hearts are assured”* before our Heavenly Father.

This *assurance* speaks of having peace with God and that tranquility entails an absence of fear, as is indicated for us in chapter four.

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 16 – 19

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us”.

What we find then is that our increasingly godly conduct in manifesting love actively one towards another proves our paternity, as being children of the Living God. This in turn gives us peace with regards to our individual standing before our Heavenly Father in Christ.

My dear brethren and sisters we all need this **assurance**, especially as we come week by week to remember the example of our beloved Lord who manifested this love so completely all through his life, even unto his death upon the stake. Such *assurance* actively generates reciprocal love on our part, whereas fear hinders the development of our love, because we are concerned with our personal standing before the Father in Christ.

Yet if truth were told most of us sit week by week and feel anything but assured before the one with whom we have to do with whom all things are naked and opened unto his eyes. The Eternal Spirit through the Apostle John provides us with these tests so that we are not in the dark and thereby hindered by fear in performing our love one to another. This epistle is fundamentally a practical book

Thus we read on in verses 20 – 21

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God”.

This is what I call a buffer passage; it’s like a railway buffer to stop the runaway train. It is one of these passages we all should have to keep coming back too in order to realign our perspective to the eternal.

The Eternal Spirit’s purpose in writing was to motivate the hearers to cultivate greater intimacy with Almighty God. The greater the intimacy, the greater our *"fellowship,"* the better we *"know"* God experientially, and the closer we *"abide"* in Him. The greater our intimacy with our Heavenly Father the more we will experience the life that is eternal.

Our Heavenly Father desires that we all come to experience life as he intended us to enjoy it in Christ, an abundant life that has an eternal focus, which will stretch seamlessly into eternity. Thus true fellowship with the Father and the Son is the essence of eternal life. We often here the following passage quoted, especially in prayers with regards to life in the age to come.

In John Chapter 10 and at verse 10

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”.

Yet the Greek in this verse stresses that this “*abundant*” life is available now, for it is in the present tense. Thus it is a possibility to live in this way, as our Master did abundantly. This is undoubtedly one of the works the Master is performing now, as he intercedes in our lives, so that we might through providential instruction grasp this eternal perspective and therefore experience this abundance to our lives now.

Yet as we sit here today, all very much aware of our shortcomings, as we compare ourselves with the standard we see upon the table, let not our hearts condemn us. For as we read here in **verse 20** “*God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*”. We must remember that because our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, they cannot be a faithful indicator of our status before the Father. After all we have such difficulty discerning the motives for our actions, our consciences although biblically instructed are not infallible.

Think about how we each very differently rationalise our sinfulness, so that it is not as bad, as it truly is and each of us do it with different aspects of sin, which beset us individually. That aside this verse is instructing us brethren and sisters to take tremendous comfort that our Heavenly Father and even our beloved Master now know our hearts and understand all things. They are not caught out or deceived, thus we can trust in their righteous judgement.

Yet the verse goes onto say “*if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God*”. Indeed we should take note of our biblically instructed consciences, it is a tool to aid us in the fight against sin, but here is the point it is not the final arbiter, as we sit here today examining ourselves.

Let us brethren and sisters “*have confidence*” towards our Heavenly Father, let each one of us be bold and free in our speech before him. Almighty God you know is big enough to take it, yes we can fail at times to give him due reverence, but that is not what is meant

here. The idea behind this word **confidence** is to pour out ourselves to God freely without any reservation or hindrance.

Yet if our hearts condemn us and there is fear present and it blocks this free flowing communication and relationship. Thus in contrast if we are secure in our Heavenly Father assured before him then we ask freely for all our needs and those of others and our communication with the throne of heaven is increased and not faltering. So the abundance of our life ought to grow and grow more apparent as we mature in Christ.

In verse 22 we read two more qualifications

“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”.

Firstly *“keeping his commandments”* and secondly *“doing those things that are pleasant in his sight”*. We could easily say that the first of these next qualifications of an abundant life is negative and the second is positive. Interestingly **note** the personal relationship aspect is being stressed for us in the first instruction in that it is *“his commandments”*. We are after all dealing with a personal God and with his beloved Son.

Then in the second we find omniscience of our Heavenly Father in that these loving acts of service are performed in *“his sight”*, nothing escapes that gaze. Yet brethren and sisters this omniscience is in relation to our personal relationship with our God, we are always in his sight, because we are always in his care. Thus in doing those things that are pleasing in his sight, we reciprocate the love shown to us and provide one another with examples to follow provoking one another to greater acts of love and good works.

Think about the following quotation in relation to what we have just said:

In John Chapter 8 and verse 29

“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him”.

See the assurance the Master had in his Father and his Father’s presence in his life, we brethren and sisters need to develop that same assurance and corresponding action in our lives. If we are to live now in any abundant way with an eternal perspective and focus to our everyday and seemingly ordinary lives.

Now as we sit here feeling very much alone in our personal examination of our walk over the last week and in our weakness before the emblems upon the table. Let us realize brethren and sisters that although our individual circumstances maybe different there is a commonality to our experience that binds us not only together, but also binds us together with the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities having suffered the same types of temptations, yet thankfully in the mercy of the Father he was without sin.

So because he was without sin, he is able to succor us who are yet tempted. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession of faith. Because the Master ever liveth to make intercession for us; he is able also to save each and every one of us to the uttermost that come unto Father by him.

That love we see manifested so completely in the emblems before us in those things that speak of his sacrifice brethren and sisters is still daily being actively manifested in each of our lives. Let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

Now come back to 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”.

This is one of my favourite passages of scripture, but undoubtedly it is one of the most challenging to us. **Note carefully** brethren and sisters the level of transformation that the Father desires to develop in each one of us. See just how incredible the reciprocation of this love shown unto us, the Father desires to develop and find in each one of our lives now. Ponder this question at your leisure brethren and sisters *“just how much change does it require to conform me personally to the image of the Son?”*

Truly none of us are anywhere near such a level of commitment brethren and sisters. Our problem is not so much the inconsistency in our lives, which is certainly present, but more importantly the lack of commitment in our hearts to the change, due to our failure to truly grasp fully the love that the Father and the Son have for us.

We must all come to see not only intellectually, but also experientially that as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ the key issue is not a list of things we do or even those things we do not do. Rather it is that we actually become like Christ, we are conformed to his image.

Radical change is needed; not just a little remedial change is required, so why do we fight and resent it when the Father introduces such changes into our lives to sculpt out our characters?

In Philippians Chapter 1 and verse 6

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”.

Do you believe our Heavenly Father is capable brethren and sisters? That this gracious and omnipotent God, who created all that we know and understand around us in six literal days, is more than able to conform each and every one of us to the image of the Master?

Yet we so often act as if it such change is just not possible for us and that God does not know what he is doing. Our Heavenly Father specializes in the impossible for with him *“nothing shall be impossible”* we read elsewhere. Yet because of our nature and our finite ability to understand we resist rather than embrace the change necessary and in doing so what opportunities of service and blessing do we each miss out on?

Let each of us brethren and sisters learn to pray for that change to come into our lives no matter how unstable and painful it makes our reasonably comfortable existence. Too often we are busy praying that such profound change might be found in our brethren and sisters and there is nothing wrong with that in its self, but let us not lack the courage to give ourselves in faith into the potters loving and shaping hands.

The reciprocation of our love **in deed** and **in truth** is *“for the brethren”* we read in that sixteenth verse, which brings before us the principle outlined in:

In Chapter 4 and verses 20 – 21

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”.

This is also the point of verse seventeen of chapter three, which records:

Verse 17

“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

Here we find a practical test concerning one’s love for our Heavenly Father, as it ought to be reciprocated towards our brethren and sisters. **Note** what this verse actually tells us. Firstly the individual has the means to provide the need on their own; they do not need help with the provision. Secondly we find that they indeed perceive the need of their brother or sister.

Thirdly and finally when their love begins to germinate they take the conscious decision to kill any compassion they feel for the other in need. It is not a passive action here brethren and sisters it is an active and conscious decision of the individual concerned. Then comes the result of this action in the penetrating question at the end of the verse *“how dwelleth the love of God in him?”*

The divine record is clear that there is not the love of God in that individual. The question then comes; to each one of us does it dwell within us? Is it present within us brethren and sisters when needs arise that are not at a convenient time for us to deal with? Are we going to see such needs as opportunities to prove the truth, strengthen our faith and that of others, while giving glory to the Father.

It is clear from the passage, just as it is clear from what we are gathered here to do my dear brethren and sisters that this *“love of God”* in no passive, sentimental, feel good thing. Rather the *“love of God”* is to be a proactive principle in our lives that looks for and considers needs and then is driven to fill them. *Is this a description of you and me brethren and sisters?*

Thus back where we started in verse 18 we read

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”.

Now as we come to break bread and drink wine brethren and sisters in these few moments of quiet contemplation around this **supreme** act of love. Let each of us brethren and sisters individually recognize the one who personally “*loved us and gave himself for us*”. Let us seek to follow his example that we each might learn to love one another as he clearly loves, as we each individually and ecclesially walk in love.

Let us brethren & sisters see clearly, **the bread**, which speaks here of the word of life’s ability to instruct each one of us in understanding both the “*love of God*” for us individually and collectively. Let us also see in this bread instruction in how to apply the “*love of God*” for others in deed and in truth.

Likewise let us see in **the wine** that, which speaks of the “*love of God*” manifested in Christ in the outworking of that word in a life full of sacrifice and service, even too the pouring out of his blood upon the stake. Let this supreme example of love personally constrain, motivate and inspire each of us brethren and sisters that we follow in his steps.