

Faith works by love

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lluminated to see our wretchedness

In this present season, Christ's eyes are searching and illuminating the darkness of our heart. We have been called to depart from living at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and to come and abide with Him at the tree of life. Jesus said, 'If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.' Joh 15:10. Christ is urging us to keep His commandments, and to travail with Him for healing in many areas of lameness and fracture in our lives. However, as our darkened modes of living have been exposed, we have quickly realised that we cannot keep His commandments by any determination or capacity of our own. Exo 19:8.

Thankfully, God does not want us to remain forever in our wretched state. When Christ's eyes expose the darkness of our heart, it is critical that we do not draw back in unbelief and shame. Heb 10:38. 'Drawing back in unbelief' means that we are choosing to believe in the counsel of our own darkness, rather than believing in Christ, the 'true Light'. Joh 1:9. Although the shame of our nakedness is being brought to the light, Christ does not meet us in this way in order to condemn us. Jesus said, 'For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.' Joh 3:17. His eyes as a flame of fire reveal the fellowship of God's love toward us. Christ is coming to us in this season, inviting us to turn from our darkened perspective and to be healed, so that we can walk on the straight paths that He has set before us. This morning, I would like to share testimony of how the Lord has recently met me in this way.

Testimony

A number of weeks ago, during our Sunday communion livestream, a word of knowledge came concerning anger. The Lord wanted to deliver husbands, wives and children from their propensity to anger. They were using it to take control of their situation and even blackmail those around them. He wanted to reveal the impact that this was having, particularly within families. He said that healing and deliverance would come to us if we turn to Him in repentance.

Immediately, I knew that this word was for me. The eyes of the Lord were looking directly at me, illuminating the darkness of my heart. I had never thought of myself as a particularly angry person. However, as we have come to understand, anger is not manifest simply in episodes of rage or outbursts of wrath. My anger had been hidden in the darkness of my heart and, until the Lord brought illumination, I did not know that it was a lameness within me that required healing.

The Lord showed me that I was expressing my anger as frustration. Frustration would arise within me when I couldn't achieve the things I had planned to do. This frustration has been particularly evident in my life during this current season of restriction caused by the corona virus. During this season, I have needed to work from home more often

than I normally would. I became constantly frustrated by the many interruptions that would not usually happen if I was working from my office at the church. One particularly disruptive example was my one-year old son, who enjoyed regularly coming into my office and unplugging the power cord from my computer. In this, and other such situations, I would attempt to regain control of the situation by freely allowing my frustration to be known to those around me. I hoped this action would remedy the situation, so that I could then quickly resume what I felt I should be doing.

We've recently understood that 'most sinners are people who have good ideals and are motivated by honourable intentions'. This certainly described me. I believed in my inherent 'good', and that I was diligently trying to obey what God wanted me to be doing. However, the Lord showed me that I was actually living in 'great darkness'. I had forgotten that I was in the Lord's hand, and that all things were working together for my good. This even included the things which disrupted my plans.

After hearing this word of knowledge and being illuminated concerning my anger, I was led to 'look on Him whom I had pierced, and mourn'. Zec 12:10. Joh 19:37. The word was declaring that I needed to love my brethren and to lay my life down for them. I liked to think that I could lay down my life for my children, my wife, and my friends. However, the Lord was showing me how wretched I really was. Instead of loving my family, I was becoming angry at them because they were inconveniencing me! And if I couldn't love my family and friends, how was I ever going to love my enemies!?! The Lord showed me that indeed 'there is none righteous, no, not one!' Rom 3:10. As one who was now poor in spirit before the Lord, I confessed that I could not obey God's command to love my brethren.

The word then came, declaring that the Lord wanted to shift my mourning to a travail. My darkness had been exposed, so that I could be delivered from the wretched state I was in. This lameness in my life had been brought to light so that I could be healed. This was an action of God's mercy and love toward me. As I continued in travail, I found healing and deliverance from my anger by speaking in fellowship with my wife and children. Through open-hearted fellowship, we were able to meet together in the Spirit, at the tree of life. I was able to share what I was coming to understand through the ministry of the word by the Spirit. I confessed this fault and apologised, seeking forgiveness for the damage my anger had caused. We then prayed in faith together, believing for healing and restoration. This open-hearted fellowship was truly a ministry of life to us all, and it was healing me and birthing me in the love of God.

The following Sunday, we heard that the love of the Father had been poured into the Son's heart. This love enabled the Son to obey the command of the Father to lay down His life. Joh 10:18. Without the Father's love, the Son could not have obeyed this command. I rejoiced as the word declared that this very same love was being poured into my heart by the Holy Spirit! I was assured that while ever I remained joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, this would be true. As I understood this, faith began to arise in my heart!

The following week, when Victor Hall was speaking, the command to love my brethren came once again by the Spirit. However, as I heard the word a second time, I was enabled to believe that I *could* obey God's commandments. This was something new to me. The Lord had healed me and poured His love into my heart. With this as my foundation, I could now confidently walk forward in accountable faith obedience to His word. I knew that there was no reason to doubt the efficacy of His healing or whether I really could

obey. Rather, I knew that I simply needed to respond in faith, and to obediently lay down my life for my family and friends.

Although I am confident of His healing, I know that I will sometimes still become angry. The apostle Paul said, 'To the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.' Php 3:16. Paul's words remind us that there are degrees of attainment in relation to our healing. I know that I have attained healing of my anger to a certain degree. I must now walk according to that level of attainment. As I remain joined to Christ and His offering, I will continue to overcome my propensity towards this anger.

Healed and birthed in the love of God

As I have just testified, we are learning in this season that God the Father loved the world, and imparted this love to the Son. The Father's love was poured into the Son's heart by the Holy Spirit. The Father then commanded the Son to love the world just as He did, and to lay down His life for it. The Son was only able to keep the Father's commandment because He had received the Father's love. This love compelled Him to give His life to us so that it would become our life.

When we turn in repentance from our darkened perspectives, the Holy Spirit meets us in our mourning and shifts it to a travail. In this travail, He joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering, and pours the love of God into our hearts. Rom 5:5. This is the very same love that was poured into the Son's heart, which enabled Him to obey the Father's command.

As we join the travail of Christ, our lameness will be healed. In this travail, we will also be brought to birth by new creation life. These things happen as we live together in open-hearted fellowship. In this fellowship, we abide in the light of God's word. We are joining with the Lord and our brethren at the tree of life. As we are led by the Spirit, we are able to minister the life of God to one another. 1Pe 4:10. We share what the Lord is saying to us by the ministry of His word. We confess our faults, seeking forgiveness and restoration with those we have wronged. We pray together, seeking to be healed and birthed in the love of God.

The faith of the Son was given to us through the ministry of the word. This faith is activated in us by the love of God being poured into our hearts. We can know and believe that we have been healed. 1Jn 4:16. Faith is now working by love! Gal 5:6. We acknowledge that there is no adequacy in ourselves to obey the commands of Christ. However, the love of God residing in our hearts *is* the very capacity which enables us to obey! By faith, we are assured that we can obey the commands of Christ. His love in our hearts enables us to stand in full identity and to walk forward in the obedience of faith. Rom 5:2.

God wants us to abide with Him at the tree of life in every aspect of our lives. As families, we do this by coming together in open-hearted fellowship. The Lord is urging the members of every family to meet in this way. His desire is for every son of God to be healed of their lameness and birthed in the love of God. It is most important that this open-hearted fellowship includes our children and teenagers.

Consider the example of a teenager learning to play the piano. During a Bible study, they heard a word about diligence. As they listened, the Holy Spirit brought to light their lack of application towards their piano practice. That night during their family devotions, they could share the word they had heard, and confess their propensity towards laziness. As

they are led by the Spirit, the family could encourage their teenager to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings in this matter. They could then pray together for the love of God to be poured into their heart, and for the healing of this lameness. Out of this open-hearted fellowship, the teenager could confidently step forward in accountable faith obedience. They can be assured that they have been fully equipped to diligently apply themselves to their practice.

Perfect love casts out all fear

The apostle John wrote, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love'. 1Jn 4:18. The love of God is perfect love. As we walk with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, this perfect love is being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is activating faith in us. This faith causes us to know and believe that our lameness is being healed. 1Jn 4:16. It assures us that we can obey God's commandments. Our capacity to obey God is not something that we should aspire towards, and hope that one day we can achieve. We are a new creation. 2Co 5:17. The apostle Peter said that God has given us His divine nature, which we know is love. Love, as a motivation, gives us everything we need to walk in obedience to God's word. 2Pe 1:3.

God's perfect love is removing our fear. Christ says to us, 'Do not be afraid; I am your shield of faith.' Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16. The shield of faith enables us to present ourselves for participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. As we do this, we do not need to doubt the healing that we have received. We do not need to fear that our 'feeble knees' will be turned out of the way again. Heb 12:12-13. These anxious thoughts will weigh us down and cause us to continue to walk with a 'limp'. Pro 12:25.

We can be confident that God 'does all things well'. Mar 7:37. Consider a person who has recently undergone a knee reconstruction. They need to trust the work of their surgeon, and literally step forward in faith. Their knee needs to carry weight and to be exercised so that it can be properly healed. We also need to step forward in faith where the Lord has brought healing to our lameness. We do this by simply obeying His word. The love of God is being poured into our hearts. We can be confident that the Lord is healing us, and that we can obey His commandments.