

FAITH IN JESUS DEMANDS LOVE FOR BRETHREN

1 John 5:1-10

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One of the key points which we learnt in **1 John 3:19-24**, was that God loved us and demonstrated and proved His love by sending His Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour, to come in human flesh, paid the supreme sacrifice of death on the cross, to enable us to be reconciled back to God and be adopted as His children.

He has commanded us to love Him with all our heart, might and soul. To prove that we love Him, we must demonstrate the same love He has for us to our fellow beings, even, our brothers and sisters in the Lord's church.

Doing this, enhances our confidence to come into and enjoy His presence. However, such love must come from our hearts, without hypocrisy, and without partiality. It must be practised based on faith, because God has commanded it.

As we continue the study of **1 John**, we will see how John established the connection between the Christian life, faith in Jesus Christ, God's love, and God's testimony.

THE POWER OF FAITH AND WORK - 1 JOHN 5:1-3

John begins by saying that the Christian life is rooted in faith.

¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

The Gnostics claimed that it is impossible for Jesus Christ to have come in the flesh. This false message weakens the faith of some brethren in Ephesus.

The Gnostics created hatred and division in their midst. Those who rejected

the Gnostics' claim felt it was justified to hate those who accepted the claim.

John explained that faith in Jesus Christ begins when one believes that Jesus came in human flesh, died for all humans, resurrected, and reigning as King of kings.

Without this faith, one cannot give his or her life to Jesus Christ. One cannot be a child of God. **Hebrews 11:6** - *without faith it is impossible to please God.*

This faith which brings one into Jesus Christ demands that we are to love God and practice the same kind of love that God has.

John says that to love the Father is to love the one who is begotten of Him. *Who are those begotten of God - our brethren.*

We are to love our brethren, for if we cannot learn to love our brother whom we see, we cannot really learn to love God whom we cannot see (**cf. 1 John 4:20**).

Faith in Jesus Christ is the faith that requires us as Christians to make real effort wholeheartedly, to love ourselves. Loving ourselves is a work of faith in Jesus Christ. If we do not love ourselves, wholeheartedly, then our faith is a dead faith.

This work of love which is performed on the basis of faith does not mean that we will not have disagreements, quarrels, needs, or challenges among ourselves.

Rather, when we find these in our midst, we shift focus on what will please God, and not ourselves, in such circumstance. When we do so, we are operating by faith, faith-based love.

In this disagreement, in this quarrel, in this situation of need, in this challenge – what does God wants me to do? What He

says I should do will be my decision and action (*cf. Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1, Matthew 5:44, Ephesians 4:32, and Matthew 25:45*).

This is John's emphasis on *verse 2 - by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments*.

John says if you want to love your brother or sister in Christ, you begin by looking at God and deciding to do what He wants you to do. Then, you can act upon that decision.

This work of love is not optional. It is not to be performed to suit our convenience. Whether you understand or know a Christian brother or sister better; whether there is a Christian brother or sister you are having difficulty loving – John says that looking to God is the only working principle to perform this work of love, and that requires faith.

We must apply God's directives always for our love to our brethren to be real, active, and accepted by God.

Verse 3 says since practising that love is commanded by God, we have no other option than to keep it.

³*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

There is a caution note – we must not see the performing of the work of this love as a burden.

Will God give us a commandment that we cannot practise? His commandments are within our capacity to keep.

Matthew 11:28 - *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Have you ever worked at a job where an unfair burden was placed on you? Have you ever felt as if you were having to carry more than your share of the load in the family? In almost every family, someone has to carry more than his share of the load to keep the family going. Sometimes this happens in the church. In your position as a

preacher, a deacon, an elder, a Bible class teacher, a youth leader, a women motivator, a committee or ministry lead, a song director, or a personal worker, have you felt you were being given a load too heavy to bear?

In human relationships that can happen, but that never happens with the commands of God. No matter how unpleasant or difficult His commands seem to be, they should never be seen as burdensome. They are always for our benefit.

John says that God loves us by giving us commandments that are not burdensome. What God asks us to do is always something that we can do if we operate by faith.

Where there is active faith – there is always victory over challenges, hatred, division, fear and hopelessness. Faith that works is our victory in Jesus Christ.

VICTORY IN FAITH - 1 JOHN 5:4-5

With that background, John gives us the formula for victory:

⁴*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

Having faith in Jesus Christ which prompts us to love our brethren as God wants to, gives us divine strength to face any challenge which we may face as Christians.

We cannot overcome the world if we try it on our own. We need divine strength. Divine strength comes from obeying God's commandments. Obeying God's commandments which include practical and genuine love to ourselves is faith – the living and active faith.

John speaks of a faith that is obedient to God. The faith that gives the victory grows out of recognizing the love of God and the need to do what God wants one to do.

The obedient faith believes in Jesus Christ and practices the same love Jesus demonstrated to the world.

⁵*Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

This obedient faith is what brings divine transformation in the life of a sinner. Whether you are an alcoholic, a drug addict, a thief, a gambler, a fraudster, a liar, a fornicator, an adulterer, or a *forsaker of the church services*, if you really believe that Jesus is that important – you will be willing to do what God wants you to do – you will surrender to Him and let Him direct your ways.

In directing your ways, you will practise His love, and that is faith. That is victory!

THE WITNESS OR TESTIMONY - 1 JOHN 5:6-10

Here, John gives us the assurance that God has given us eternal life through Jesus Christ.

He asserted that Jesus was both human and divine and that anyone denying this is of the antichrist.

John calls forth three great witnesses to support his testimony.

⁶*This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

⁷*For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.*

⁸*And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*

Each of these three witnesses of John bears witness to Jesus' earthly life as well as to His divinity.

John constructed his statement to indicate that the witness-bearing is continuous. *"There are three who are the ones who are witnessing."*

It was not a one-time witness; but, the three witnesses continue to bear witness.

We can be sure of the truth of Jesus' divinity because of the nature of the witnesses. There is a plurality of witnesses (*cf. Deuteronomy 19:15, and Matthew 18:20*).

John provides us with ample testimony of the Lord's divinity.

The witnesses provide sufficient credentials for Jesus. In fact, John continued by saying that *it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

The first witness is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit first bore witness to Jesus at His baptism (**Matthew 3:16, 17**). Jesus told His disciples that when the Spirit came He would testify of Him (**John 14:26**).

In **Acts 2:38**, we are told that anyone who gives his or her life to Christ is given the Holy Spirit as God's gift. One who has obedient faith, who practises the love of Jesus, has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her.

¹⁰*He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself...*

The second witness is water. Again, the water testified of Jesus at His baptism. In **Matthew 3:14-17** we read of the baptism of Jesus by John and the testimony of the Spirit.

The water baptism Jesus experienced was not to wash away His sins, for He had none, but it was to testify to the truth of Jesus. Every time a person is baptized in water, he testifies to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

The continuing use of water as a witness of Jesus is further testimony of the importance of baptism in the scheme of redemption. In baptism, we re-enact Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Whenever one is immersed in water for the remission of sins, he is witnessing to the Christ.

The third witness is blood. Of course, all of us realize the power of the blood of Jesus. It was shed to wipe out all of mankind's sin. All we have to do is to avail ourselves of this blood.

The blood testify to Jesus' humanity through the Lord's Supper. As we eat the Lord's Supper each first day of the week, we testify to those who observe us doing so that we believe that Jesus died and was raised for our sins. The Lord's Supper is a marvellous testimony to the Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:26 – *for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

A beautiful idea about these three witnesses is that the three are in agreement.

What greater testimony is available? Jesus has been certified as the Son of God by the source of truth, the Holy Spirit.

John tells us that this testimony is far greater than man's testimony.

⁹If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

You can see why the love of God must be practised on the basis of how God wants it and not our ways.

The Christian faith obeys God and practise His love because he or she accepts the testimony of God. If we do not accept God's testimony, then we are calling God a liar.

¹⁰...he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

When the Word of God (*inspired by the Holy Spirit*) speaks to us about wholehearted practical love, faithfulness, commitment, and service in our Christian lives, it means we can fulfil these commandments because our faith knows they are right.

CONCLUSION

Do you believe in the humanity of Jesus? Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus?

If yes, have you surrendered your life to Him, through faith, repentance and baptism?

If yes, will you develop a faith that obeys whatever Jesus says you should do though it may be unpleasant to you?

If yes, are you willing to demonstrate the love of God to your brethren based on that faith?

If yes, welcome to the victory in Jesus which comes by faith in Him and practising of His love.

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