

Love Rejoices with the Truth

「Introduction」

In an age overrun with fakery, the words “rejoices with the truth” as an expression of love resonate more deeply. Love means keeping falsehood at a distance, following truth, and living authentically. Falsehood and lawlessness are love’s greatest enemies. Relationships wrapped in deception do not last long. Love must not be blind, and it must stand together with truth. Love gains its strength when it is truthful. Love never stands alone. Love rejoices with the truth. [From Love by Kuk-jin Lee]

「A duet of love and truth」

Love and truth sing together. What would happen if 1 Corinthians 13 lacked the phrase “rejoices with the truth”? If it had only said that love is patient, kind, and endures all things, could we call that the complete love of God? The love the Bible speaks of holds a perfect balance.

Sharing

Share about a time when you had a ‘truthful advisor’ in your life. Why were that person’s words and advice beneficial to your life? (How were they different from the advice of others?)

1. Truth and love: love cannot simply leave things be

[Content]

Speaking the truth is not easy. Yet however hard and difficult it may be, we must speak the truth. If we had no love, we wouldn’t care whether someone lived or died, whether they were ruined or not. But if we love someone, we cannot simply stand by and watch them being destroyed by sin. We must speak the truth. We must be able to tell them to correct their wrongdoing.

[The Corinthian Background]

The apostle Paul wrote a letter of exhortation to correct the wrongs in the church in Corinth. It is said that he shed many tears while writing that letter.

2 Corinthians 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you

Because Paul loved the church in Corinth, he could not simply ignore the various faults and sins present within it. This is how love gives us the strength to speak the truth.

Sharing

Has there been a time when you needed to tell the truth to someone but never said it and let the moment pass? Why weren’t you able to say it then?

「Consider “discipline”, the church’s posture in upholding truth」

When the Reformation took place in the 16th century, an important question arose among the Reformed theologians: “What must a church necessarily have to be a church?” The Reformers held that a church’s outward appearance, tradition, size, or influence could not serve as marks of a true church. Thus, the Christian (Protestant) tradition names three marks of a true church: 1) the faithful preaching of the Word, 2) the right administration of the sacraments, and 3) the faithful exercise of discipline. The Reformers particularly held that if a church proclaimed the Word rightly yet left sin within the church unaddressed and did not pursue holiness, it could not be called a true church. Discipline was understood as the mark which showed that the preaching of the Word was actually being applied in the real life of the church. When the church lost its practice of “discipline” in fear of people and failed to rebuke the wrongdoing of its members, the church grew weak and people grew more wicked. Could it be that what the church has lost is not “discipline” but true “love”?

[Application Question]

What do we need for our church to fulfill its responsibility of discipline? Let us examine ourselves as the church.

2. The attitude of believers in receiving exhortation

[The Corinthian Background]

Paul's exhortation provoked backlash from the church in Corinth. He wrote a total of four letters. Of these, the first and third letters have been lost; the second letter is what is now 1 Corinthians, and the fourth letter is 2 Corinthians. The first, lost letter contained the exhortation "do not associate with the sexually immoral." But rather than resolving the problem, this letter only made the situation worse. The church members who received the letter instead began attacking Paul's apostolic authority and the legitimacy of his ministry. Paul even visited the church in person to try to set this matter right, but the situation grew so difficult that Paul later remembered this visit as a "painful visit".

[Application Question]

Let us reflect on whether we have a similar attitude as the believers in Corinth. Choose three of the words below that reflect why it is hard for you to accept other people's advice and exhortation.

Pride · Arrogance · Defensiveness · Hurt · Distrust · Fear · Inferiority complex · Face · Stubbornness · Self-certainty · Misunderstanding · Awkward relationship · Desire for approval · Self-justification

3. Let us learn about God's love

1) God is our Father

God our Father will never allow His own children to leave the truth and walk the path of sin continuously.

Hebrews 12:6-11 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

2) God's love was revealed at the cross

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Because God hates sin, He required payment for sin; because He loves us, He had Christ Himself bear that payment on the cross. Love without truth is not righteous, and truth without love cannot bring people to life. In the cross of Jesus, truth and love sing together. The cross was the love of God.

4. Let us love one another

[The Corinthian Background]

Paul wrote his letter of exhortation with tears. His rebuke toward the church was an exhortation of deep love from his own heart. It was not the heart of a teacher or a colleague, but the heart of a father looking at his own child. That tearful love ultimately bore fruit, leading the church to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-9). Hallelujah!

[Application]

We ought to speak the truth in love. But that exhortation of truth must begin from tearful prayer and a heart of love. Paul continued to embrace and love the church all the way through writing four letters. This was like the love of a parent who cannot give up on his/her child. Our own exhortations too should come from such a process.

Sharing

What has been lacking in the way I give exhortation? Let us examine ourselves and pray that true love would be present within us.

The 10 commandments of loving exhortation

1. Begin with love as the motive (1 Cor. 16:14; 2 Cor. 2:4)
 2. Exhort with tears and an aching heart (2 Cor. 2:4)
 3. Examine yourself first (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 7:3-5)
 4. Speak truthfully without deceit (Rom. 12:9; Eph. 4:15)
 5. Begin privately one-on-one (Matt. 18:15)
 6. Set restoration and holiness as the goal (Heb. 12:10-11; Gal. 6:1)
 7. Speak with gentleness and kindness (2 Tim. 2:24-25; 1 Pet. 3:15)
 8. Listen first and wait patiently (Jas. 1:19; 1 Cor. 13:7)
 9. Embrace and bear burdens as community to the end (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 15:1)
 10. Let it all be done for the glory of God and the edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:12)
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