

UNTO THE LORD FAST

DAY TWO

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Hello Victory friends and family. I hope you are doing well on this fast and you feel the Lord's nearness as He is setting you apart for His purposes and good pleasure. Let's start out this devotional by reading the scripture reference that our theme for this fast comes from. The writer, Paul, is known to be wordy with his descriptions, and the sentence where we see the words "truth in love" is six verses long. Let's read the full sentence for context.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NKJV)

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Wow! That is a mouth full. I just want to paint a big picture of what Paul is speaking of as he pens the words, "truth in love," so we can dive into where the Lord wants to take us today. In this scripture passage, Paul is speaking of the unity and the maturing of the body of Christ – God's people.

First, I would like to point out that Paul is referencing how we should be speaking to one another who are within the church. Galatians 6:10 (NKJV) says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”.

Jesus says in John 13:35 (NKJV), “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jesus did not say, “All will know that you are my disciples because of how you love the world.” He said it was how we love one another, who are in Christ, that will show everyone that you are following Him.

I make this point to say, first and foremost, it is important how we treat one another in the family of God. If anyone knows who we truly are and how we truly treat people, it is as our family. If we can learn how to treat people right within our own family, we will generally treat people right outside of our family. The same is true with the family of God.

Our families are the ones that see us when we “let everything hang out” so to speak. It is when we are with our family that we feel we can be ourselves, relaxed, and transparent. At the same time, it is with family that we can become the most wounded, frustrated, and irritable. This combination tends to bring out a nature within us that isn’t what we, or others, care to see. It brings out the fleshly nature and old man within us that still needs to die.

Each family creates a culture of how they treat each other, how they deal with issues, and how they genuinely care for one another. The Lord has a culture that He has set within His family too, and “speaking the truth in love” is of top priority. The way we treat one another within our church family will show the world whether we are really “walking the walk and talking the talk” as disciples of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 16:14 (NKJV) it says, “Let all that you do be done with love.” Love is to be the “heart” behind everything we do. It should be the motivation of every action. It is to be the essence of who we are, just as it is for God. Scripture says that God actually is love!

First John 4:7–8 (NKJV) says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”

If God is love, then He is the deciding factor of what love is and what love is not. There are many in this day that say, “love is love,” but this is a deceptive lie. God determines what is love and what is not, and He has made it clear in scripture, so know that not everything that professes to be love really is. If the enemy masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), just know that there is evil masquerading as love as well.

This is why we must know truth – THE TRUTH. Just as God is love, so God is truth. Jesus says in John 14:6 (NKJV), “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”

Truth is so important to our growth. Without truth, we do not know what is right, good, holy, wise, and acceptable. We must be faithful to speak truth to one another.

Remember the scripture we read earlier, “Let all that you do be done with love?” Jesus said the two greatest commandments in all of scripture are to “love the Lord, your God” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” If we are loving God, then we will obey His command to always speak the truth. If we are loving one another, we will always speak truth, because we know that the truth brings life, growth, and true freedom in another person’s life.

If we are loving others, we should never be afraid to speak the truth of God’s word to them because “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.....But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18 NKJV). When we are afraid to speak the truth into another’s life, we have not been perfected in the love of God, nor in our love for others. This reveals areas in our lives that we need to seek the Lord to be transformed.

You may have heard Pastor Brian say, “There is the beautiful truth and the ugly truth.” Look at the blessings and curses found in Deuteronomy for example.

In Deuteronomy 28, the beautiful truth is all the blessings a nation can have in the Lord when the people follow His ways. The ugly truth is all the curses that come upon a nation who does not follow in the Lord's ways. God lovingly gives us both forms of truth so we can see rightly, clearly, and with understanding, in order to be successful in walking in the love and ways of the Lord.

If our Heavenly Father speaks to us in this manner (both the good and ugly truth), then we also must speak to one another the same. We see in what is called the Western Church of today that many are communicating partial truths and are ending up leading many people astray. The hyper-grace teaching of today, for example, speaks of God's grace, but not of repentance, obedience, and God's judgements coming to all. If you look at many false religions and cults today, you will find fragments of truth wrapped in deception.

We must embrace and speak the fullness of the gospel. Sin has wages of death and keeps us from the glory of God, but God sent His Son to die in our place to take away our sins that we might be forgiven and reconciled to Himself. Not only that, but He was risen to life in total victory, defeating death, hell, and the grave completely, which is our Blessed Hope that one day we too will be raised in total perfection, victory, and eternal life. All those who repent and commit their lives to Jesus are born of the Spirit, who fills them and dwells within them, transforming them and empowering them to live as sons and daughters of God. When Jesus returns, all people will be judged. Believers will give an account for themselves as sons and daughters of God and receive rewards. Those who rejected God's Son, His Lordship and ways will face final judgment and eternal separation from God.

That is the ugly truth and the beautiful truth all wrapped up in the person of our Lord, Savior and Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. As we look to the fullness of Jesus, from Genesis to Revelation, we will see what speaking the truth in love truly looks like.

So, how do we know how to truly love? We know by God's love that was manifested through Jesus. How do we know what truth is? We know by the manifestation of God's Word and only begotten Son. God, the Father, manifested both His love and truth through Jesus.

I want to say it to you like this: When you focus on love, instead of Jesus, you compromise truth. When you focus on truth, instead of Jesus, you compromise love. Jesus is the focus of our lives. He is the full package of what "truth in love" looks like!

Let's go back to Ephesians 4 for a little more food for thought before we end our devotional for today. Verse 15 says, "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ" (NKJV).

The purpose for "speaking the truth in love" is to bring growth and maturity to the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is to grow in proportion to the Head, who is Jesus. Speaking and hearing the "truth in love" is the key to the Body of Christ growing and maturing properly to match Jesus as the Head of the Body. The Body of Christ needs truth, and it needs truth wrapped in love. This is the formula we need in order to be nourished, strengthened, and edified into "a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (vs. 13).

In other words, Paul is informing us of God's family culture and model. This is how God raises His sons and daughters, so they become all that they are created to become. This is how He treats His only Begotten Son, and this is how He raises His adopted sons and daughters. He gives each one of us the task and command to do the same for one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ, that we can be His hands and feet extended to care for one another and cause the church to grow into the fulness of our purpose and calling!

If we are the Body of Christ, truth and love must become as strong in us as it is in Jesus. We must grow into the truth and love of God. Just as it is God's nature, so it must become ours. That is only possible because we have been born of the Spirit, and God's grace empowers us to do it. We must be conformed into the image of Christ because we are His Body.

"Speaking the truth in love" is important to God because it is how He grows His children into perfect maturity. We pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10 NKJV). "Speaking the truth in love" is how we bring God's family culture down to earth, so He can rightly raise spiritual sons and daughters in the earth that manifest Jesus and live in His glorious presence.

Let's pray:

Lord, thank You for Your gifts that you have given to Your Church to mature us into the full stature of Christ. If this was not possible, You would not have said it through Your Holy Scriptures. Lord, we know with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. We ask that You teach us how to speak the truth in love to one another, so Your Body may grow up in all things into Christ. May our lives be conformed into the image of Christ that we may speak the truth in love to one another. May each one of us at Victory do our share and part to edify and build up one another so that Your Body may grow as it should. Thank You that You are raising us up into full maturity, so that we will not be carried away by every "wind of doctrine," by any trickery of men, or by any cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. Thank You that we are rooted, grounded, and established in You. Thank You for the nurturing and care You give to Your Body. Thank You that You are transforming us on this fast into Your image and the fullness of Christ. In Jesus Name, Amen.