

The Blessing of Love

Leo Tolstoy

1908

(An appeal to people-brothers)

Dear brothers, especially those of you who is now fighting for one governmental structure or another, which nobody needs. All you, dear brother, whoever you are, king, minister, a worker, a peasant, you need just one thing. And this is to spend this indeterminate short moment of life in a way that the one who sent you in this life wants.

We all know, and I've always indistinctly felt this, and further I am in life, the clearer this is to me. Now, from today, I for the first time clearly felt that natural for any live person proximity of tomorrow and closeness of death, only not dreadful but as a transition that is natural and beneficial, just as transition to the next day. Now, having sensed this, it became to me both scary and, most importantly, strange to think of that terrible hateful life that most of us, born for love and for good, now live.

Who we are, what we are? Because we're only insignificant, likely to disappear at any moment creatures, leaped out from obscurity for a moment into this wonderful, joyful life, with the sky, the Sun, forests, meadows, rivers, birds, animals, with the bliss of love for all – for family, for our own soul, for the kindness, and for all living beings. And so what? We, these creatures, don't find anything better rather than to give this short, uncertain moment of life, on the verge of being interrupted at any minute, - to disfigure it with ten-storied buildings, pavements, smoke, smog, to bury ourselves in these slums, descend under the Earth to extract the stones and iron to build railroads delivering worldwide unnecessary to anyone people and unnecessary products, and, most importantly, instead of leading a joyful life, life of love, - to hate, fear, harass, hassle, kill, lock, execute, to learn to kill, and to kill each other.

This is awful indeed!

Those, who do this, say that they do all of this in order to get rid of everything bad and, what's more dishonest, they say they are doing this to save people from evil, that by doing this they're guided by love to people.

Dear brothers, come to your senses, look, think about your weakness, that in this elusive short period of life between the two eternities or rather two timelessnesses, - think about the life for which love is the highest benefit, think about how insane it is not to do what is natural for you to do but instead to do what you are doing.

To you in your darkness, supported by involuntary public opinion, everything you do seems to be an inevitable prerequisite of life of the people of our time, and that what you do is taking part

in the life of mankind worldwide, that you can't not to do what you were doing and are doing and feel it's necessary to do. But it would be nice to think so if what you're doing coincided with the demands of your soul, if that benefited you and other people. But this is not the case. The life of the world, of the whole humanity, the way it goes now, requires from you anger and involvement in a work unloving to some brothers of yours for the sake of others, does no good to others, neither to you.

"But we are working for the future", they answer. But why a life of love in the present, now, needs to be sacrificed for some unknown to us future life? Isn't it obvious that this is a strange, harmful superstition? I know, without a doubt, know that life is in love and in the law of God and in the demand of my heart and happiness for me and for others, and suddenly some kind of abstract reasoning will make me abandon my very unquestionable blessing, my duty, my law... For the sake of what? For nothing. For the sake of a tradition, a habit, an imitation.

Let only the fighter for "freedom" or "order" put one hundredth of the efforts and the victims which he puts to fight for the sake of his ideas, - to increase the love in himself and others, and he - not like in the act of fight which doesn't have visible results but are only expected, - he'll immediately see the fruits of his labor of love and not only in himself: in the great joy of love, but also in the footprints which inevitably this activity leaves on others. Dear brothers, please wake up, get rid of that awful inertia, delusion (the delusion that fight, the animal fight, may be innate and not detrimental to a human); and you will know the joy, blessing, holiness of life, indestructible by anything: neither by attacks of other people because these attacks will only strengthen the reason for love, nor by fear of death because love doesn't have death.

Dear brothers, I don't dare to say: "believe me, believe me," - do not believe but check what I'm saying, check it out for at least one day. At least one day, staying in those conditions in which the day caught you, give yourself a task in any deed of the day to be guided only by love. And I know that once you do this, you won't return back to those old, terrible, destructive beliefs.

I ask you one thing, dear brothers: just question whether that life, which has evolved among us, is the one that should be (this life is a perversion of life), and believe that love is the purpose, the essence, the benefit of our life, and that strive for something good that lives in every heart, that sorrow over something that is missing yet what we should have: bliss - that legitimate sense which should be satisfied and gets satisfied easily if only people don't consider life, as now, what is a perversion of it.

Dear brothers, for your sake, do this: doubt in this seemingly important outward life you live, understand that, not talking about your personal fame, wealth, etc., all those imaginary devices of social life of millions and millions of people, all of this is insignificant and pitiful trivia, compared to that soul which you acknowledge in yourself in this short moment of life between birth and death, and which incessantly declares its requirements to you. Live only for it and by it, by love to which it calls you, and all the blessings, for you and all people, that you only can dream of will come true in countless more times. Only believe in the blessing of love which is open to you and calling you.

August 21, 1908.

P.S. I thought I would die in that day when I wrote this. I didn't die, but my faith in what I have expressed here remains the same, and I know that will not change until my death, which in any case should occur very soon. *Lev Tolstoy*

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