

Studies in 1 John 08 Who Is My Brother ?

by John W. Bramhall

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commandments in showing love to our fellow believers, and the foundation of true devotion is the appreciation of what God has done to save our souls.

Duration: 49:22

Topics: "Christian Love", "Godly Compassion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story from the time of the Great Depression in Georgia, where a father and his five children were living in extreme poverty and neglect. A Christian sister and a county nurse were moved by compassion and decided to help the family. The preacher emphasizes that the love we show to others is not our own, but the love of God working through us. He highlights the importance of appreciating the sacrifice of Jesus and the love of God in our own lives as the foundation for showing love to others. The preacher encourages believers to love not just in words, but in actions and truth, following the example of Christ.

Transcript

It will be a great joy when the Lord Jesus comes and takes us home. Well, shall we turn in our epistle of John in the fifth chapter, if you please? The first epistle of John, chapter five. We would like to begin reading at verse one and read only through verse five.

First John, chapter one, reading from verse one and reading through verse five. John, the beloved apostle, writing by the Holy Spirit and saying, Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? May God add his blessing to the reading and hearing of his precious word.

May the Holy Spirit remind us, as we have covered this epistle down to this particular point, that the great truth of it is in relation to God the Father and his beloved family of children. We do rejoice in the family relationship that we who are the children of God have been brought into, whereby we can cry according to the word of God by the Holy Spirit and address him as our Father. May I repeat with emphasis, and no

apology for the repetition of the truth, the Father's desire is that the children might maintain with great joy happy fellowship with him.

The great theme of the epistle, as we notice from the commencement of it, is our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The Father we have been noting is very anxious that while we're in this world, in the latter portion of the epistle, chapters three through five, we might maintain that fellowship with the Father. We have no hesitancy to say, and we shall see it this morning in particular, there are difficulties while we're in this world to maintain fellowship with the Father in unbroken communion and with his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of those difficulties John has already covered as we began in chapter three and went on. The particular problem of practically living in righteousness while we're in this world, and my beloved let us ever remember, we cannot be telling the truth that we are in happy fellowship with God if we as his children are not living right. And the practical righteousness of the life is imperative to maintain the fellowship and the happiness and joy of communion with our Father and with his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also noted particularly last night in the latter section of chapter four the evidences of that brotherly love that the Father is very desirous to see expressed and manifested within the family while we're upon the earth. We cannot indeed emphasize too greatly the Father's desire that the family manifest one to the other brotherly affection. I love the remembrance of that little letter that the Lord Jesus sent to the Church of Philadelphia, as you may read of it in chapter three of the book of the Revelation, to the Church of Philadelphia right.

And the meaning of that name as we may well know, brotherly affection. There is no question of doubt that the Lord by the Spirit chose that little company of Philadelphian believers to be found mentioned in the historical and the prophetic and as well as the spiritual history of the Church as recorded in chapters two and three of the book of the Revelation. I can only commend to you no better example in the midst of difficulties, decline spiritually, and many other problems that faces the Church upon the earth the example of the Philadelphian testimony.

They were concerned about brotherly love and that brotherly love was manifested that magnified and gave them the joy of knowing and experiencing the very person of Christ in their midst. Together with the blessing that followed in the enjoyment they obeyed the word of God, they did not deny his name. Brotherly affection, that's John's subject as we covered it last evening in the third chapter.

The evidence of the brotherly love. We look at this section before us this morning from verse one through five. May we not title it in this manner? Who is my brother? For I'm sure that many times the question may be brought, whether by the flesh, whether by the world, whether by believers, who really is the brother that I can love? Or who is the brother that I should be loving? And John goes directly to the problem.

For we must, and let us not fail to confess it, it is very easy for each of us to make the choice whom we do desire to express our Christian love unto. And we should certainly recognize that which the Lord Jesus gives to us by the Spirit through John, what is the test for me as to my relationship toward my fellow believers in the family of God? Which of them should I love? I'm sure we can recognize it is not that we should love only those who belong to a particular ecclesiastical fellowship. Let us lay that aside.

That is contrary to the will of the Father, that my love should only be toward those of any particular fellowship of believers in their ecclesiastical gathering, whatever and wherever it might be. Then let us also remember this fact. It is not only those who may be well along the way in doctrine and in truth, who have grown spiritually and in their lives manifest the knowledge of the truth of the Word of God.

And it might also be possible, I'm sure sometimes, there may be Christians that may have a personal attraction toward us above many other believers. Should my love only go forth to those to whom I may be personally attracted because of their personality or even their testimony? Should I restrict my affection to those who may be strong and outstanding in their Christian lives? Well, the beloved Apostle John makes it very simple. He makes it very plain in its simplicity as well as in its divine requirement in the opening of verse 1, whom we should love.

Note the words. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Now you note the expression carefully.

It is the one who is born of God. It is the one who by the evidence of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is begotten of God. May I emphasize what we did at the beginning? It is not light, L-I-G-H-T, that is the basis of family fellowship.

It is life, the oneness of life, that divine light, that eternal light which is ours in the family of God. Life is the basis of my love that I should manifest to my fellow believers. Now I will agree, and we shall see, that the enjoyment of that fellowship in its measure may often depend upon other circumstances.

But as far as the manifestation of my love to any and to all of God's children, the foundation basis of it is this, they have life with me in the family of God. And as John well adds at the close of verse 1, everyone that loveth him that begat, which is the father who begot us through his son, loveth him also that is begotten of him. How we should recognize the ground of our love and of our affection? May we point out, it is not a narrow circle, but the compass of that circle embraces everyone that is in the father's family.

And my love to my fellow believers should find its circle in that white circle that the father's love has embraced everyone that is his child. And that is my responsibility. There may be difficulties, there may be problems, and there are, which we shall see as we go along.

But lay down the basic fact, because they have life in the family of God, I am to love them as my fellow brother and my fellow sister in Christ, as the case may be. The father's love embraces the complete family. And may you and I have just the same wideness of affection for them all.

I remember the words of C. H. Mackintosh Wells when he was speaking upon the life and the walk of separation for the believer from 2nd Corinthians chapter 6. I'm so fitting with the words that he said. We must walk the separated path with a wide heart, and for this we need the grace of God. May I apply it to the truth before us in John? Here is a white fellowship, our fellowship with the father, with his son Jesus Christ, with one another, every child of God.

And I think you will admit the truth of what Mackintosh really declared, for this we need the grace of God. And thank God he give us more grace. But let's go further, and I want you to note verse 2 particularly.

Now here is an important principle. The manner in which I should manifest my love to my fellow believers and the members of God's family. The manner in which I must show the love of God to the members of his family.

And this is the test. Look, true we may agree we should do it. We may agree this is God's command.

We will agree that the commandment of the Lord still stands. A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another. But we must also be clear upon this principle.

The manner in which that love from my heart must be shown to my brother and to my sister as I obey the Lord's commandment. And may I say, it may not be the fact that I know I should love my brother and my sister. But the test is, will I do it the way God wants me to? Will I do it in the manner that God declares it must be done? Now may I repeat, we are living in days as we well know around us.

There is the emphasis of love, which often times is not a divine emphasis. And which is at the sacrifice of what God demands in the expression of true Christian love. The so-called ecumenical movement that seeks to bring the whole body of professing Christendom into a oneness of expression and uses the expression of love as the ground, needs to realize that love can only be expressed according to the will of the Father and according to its truth.

To express love to my fellow member of the family at the sacrifice of my obedience to the word of God, that's not true divine love. Now note the words of verse two, let me read them. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandment.

Now let me repeat, in simplicity and earnestness, we do not manifest true love toward our brothers and sisters if it is manifested at the sacrifice of obedience to the word of God. Shall we not say, here is the family, here is the father, here are the children, love to the father must come in responsibility before love to one another. Shall I love the children of God or attempt or seek to endeavor to show love to my fellow believer at the expense of denying my faithfulness, my affection, my obedience to my father's will? Never.

I do not show true love to a child of God, a fellow member of the family, if I go along with that beloved believer in his path or in his act of disobedience to the will of God. My example of true love to my brother and sister is manifested when I am obedient to my father's will and to my father's word, and this is a responsibility. A child of God, as we stated in preceding messages, it is one thing to be a child of God and it may be another to be an obedient child of God.

And I'm sure that you may already realize, some of you that have been with us through the study, that we have had the emphasis of obedience as being the test of being a true child of God. And the apostle emphasizes the test of obedience to even manifest true love toward God's beloved children. And what a responsibility that is.

Let me give you two examples. For instance, to look at these examples chiefly. Suppose a child of God is walking in an immoral path, contrary to the father's heart, contrary to the father's will, contrary to the path of obedience.

Can I condone such a path in which they are walking? Should I go and walk with them in that path, thinking that I can so do it and show my love for them? No! When a child of God is disobedient, walking in a path of morality that is contrary to the truth and to the character of the father, though I may love them and I should love them, I can't walk with them. My love to him will be demonstrated when I show him by my life I'm walking in fellowship with my father. Take the ground of false doctrine, and as much of it prevailing today, and unfortunately there are many believers today that are sacrificing doctrine, truth, that they might show love to other fellow Christians.

What did John say in the last epistle that he wrote? Precious words. I have no greater joy than that my children walk, where? In the truth. Now beloved, let's take it clearly.

We've emphasized properly. Who is my brother? Every child of God. And my love is to go out to everyone who has been born to the father's family.

But the manner in which it is demonstrated to the glory of God, and it will be also to the blessing of the believer, is knowing that we love the children of God. Please note the expression, I really rejoice in it. We love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments.

Now it might possibly be the disobedient believer, the disobedient child of God may not think that I love him when I refuse to go his way, when I refuse to accept the false doctrine that he holds. Oh my beloved fellow believer, we have to confess there are difficulties, and particularly today, as we see the divided condition of the state, of the church and its profession, all around us. We certainly can recognize, and those difficulties are very subtle today, when as often it is expressed, there should be a necromantic love, but oftentimes requested at the expense of disobeying the truth of God.

No! My love for my father comes first. My love to him is the divine principle that I must obey. There's no question about it.

He will honor it. He will honor it. How can I correct the path of disobedience that I see in another child of God, but by my example? Best of all, I may seek, and may endeavor to teach him, and instruct, and correct the disobedient path that he is treading in.

But if I take the same path, I'll dishonor my father. But if I walk contrary to his disobedience, in obedience to my father, and set before him the truth of my father's word, that's the best way. I must show him, and I do show him my love.

And thus we may recognize, I reveal, as I seek to enlighten him, after the truth of God, regarding the father's will. And then also, there's no question of doubt, I cannot relegate him away out of my mind, out of my heart, and though I may not even be able to reach him, as I would endeavor to reach him, with the correction of the word of God. But there's another thing I can do.

I can pray for him. I can show the father I love him by my prayers for him, or for her, as the case may be. Oh my beloved, listen, let me just culminate it in this one truth.

There is the proper manner of showing our love toward one another, and to do it according to the father's word, and show that by obedience to the father's will, this is the true manner of expressing my true affection for his beloved children, wherever they are, and with, and whosoever they may be. Let me just link together the words we saw in chapter three in verse 18. Look at them if you wish.

I'm sure that they will culminate to help us realize the manner of our love, as John expressed it regarding laying down our life for the brethren. And then at the end of verse 18, he consummates the expression of that love by saying, my dear children, let us not love in words, neither in tongue, but in deed. And note the next word, in truth.

In truth, oh beloved, how we must remember, ever remember, my obedience to the father's will will be obedience to the truth of God. What I do for my fellow believers will be according to what the word of God tells me to perform, and would to God that you and I had more grace, wisdom, power, love by the spirit to

show to all, regardless of the difficulties, and I admit the difficulties, many times the actions, the character, the personality, the weaknesses, and the conditions that may prevail in the person, may make one realize how difficult the problem may be. But let's remember this, the love we show is not our own, it's the love of God, it's the love of God, it's the love of God.

Many years ago, in the state of Georgia, there was a very sad condition exposed of a father with five children in the pitiful state back in the days of the depression. They knew nothing of God, they were pitifully poor, and the children were pitifully covered, in fact the youngest one of three had no clothes at all, the others had nothing but rags. A paralytic boy of fourteen years of age was in a corner sinning, and he had been sinning for days and weeks in his filth, no one caring for him, the father giving up all hope his wife having died, and he just let things go.

One of our Christian sisters was brought into knowledge of that particular case together with the county nurse, and as they made the investigation of the condition of this family, they returned back to the town nearby where they lived, and once said to the sister in Christ, Mrs. Anderson, could you go and help that family clean those children up and wash them up, clean them from their filth? She said, there's only one way I can do it. She said, when I remember how my God loved me and gave his son to die for my sins, she says, I can do it. It's the love of God, the love that is shown to you and to me, that love that led him to give his son, please may I say, may I put it in this expression, if I can show you the proper love of God, it will only be on the basis of this fact, my appreciation of the death of Christ that saved my soul, whom the Father gave.

When it comes to devotion to God, to Christ, and to one another, the greatest foundation of true devotion is the appreciation of what God has done to save my soul, what God has done to save your soul, and as we have emphasized, as John did in the preceding study, it was the love of God. Now going back, if you please, may I go back to verse 7 of chapter 4? Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and let us rejoice. It is not the earthly natural love that is to be shown to the family of God, but the flow of that love, the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which has been given to us.

Now go to verse 3 of our chapter 5, and I want you to note that our responsibility is not only to be in obedience to the will and the word of God, and keep his commandments, and prove by example, and in whatever way possible to my brother and sister, my Christian love for him, but in verse 3 the Apostle goes, he gives another counter text as it were of that love. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. May I point out what I believe the Apostle is saying, I cannot love my brother and my sister properly unless I'm keeping the word of God.

It's a counter text again for what he's already declared. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and I'm sure you know he's not referring to the 10 commandments. As we have mentioned in preceding studies in chapter 2, the commandments are the precepts, the charges, the teachings of the Lord Jesus, as we have seen them and known them, and know them to be revealed in the New Testament, by himself, by his Apostles, the keeping of the word of God, and the keeping of that precious word, his commandments.

That is the manner in which I show the love of God. May I point out to you, or may I indeed emphasize it, how we need to know the word of God, how we need to know the word of God. One wrote these words, I never forgotten, for every difficulty, for every problem, for every circumstance in life that we face, there is an answer for it in the word of God.

But we need to know where to find it. My brother and my sister, and we who are the children of God in any assembly capacity, and local fellowship per se, we have all we need in the directions of God's word, to find what we should be doing. Are there assembly difficulties? May I say they can only be answered by the word of God, and corrected according to God's word.

Are there personal difficulties between brother and sister in Christ, and so on? The word of God will clearly and plainly teach us how those difficulties should be resolved. They are his commandments. And John adds precious words when he says, and his commandments, they are not grievous.

It becomes grievous when we don't obey his commandments. And I'm sure we'll confess that. When I'm disobedient to my father's word and his will, then things do become grievous.

But his commandments are not grievous. Please may I encourage all of us to realize, if I will obey what my father says, everything will be well. Everything will be done right.

For his commandments are not grievous. But you know in verses four and five, you may wonder, as I well do too, why John brings in a subject that is in an opposite direction to the father's will and the father's family. He brings up the problem of the world.

Quite a vivid contrast. For as he goes on to say, whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. Why does he put the world in that? Here he is talking about loving one another.

Here he is bringing up the manner in which we should love one another, as well as the responsibility to be in obedience to the father's will to show that true love for fellow brother and sister in Christ. Well beloved, very frankly, if there is a hindrance that can keep you and me from doing it, it's the world. The world.

The world cannot love as the Christian is told to love. The world loves its own. The world has its standards of affection, whatever they be.

Even the Lord Jesus when he was upon the earth declared, that there were many, though they were evil, yet though in evil companionship, they had regard one for another. And you and I can recognize, the world cannot be the standard whereby we should love one another. You say, why not? Well let me just point out to you very quickly, there are very many different standards of living in this world.

And those who perhaps may be great in the world, high in the society of the world, they may marvel that if there be a lonely believer, if there be a humble saint, who may not have much intellectualism, who may not have much monetary or material possessions, but who may even be in poverty. Yet if he's in the family of God, the believers of the family are to love him. Now that's not the world's standard.

They live apart from such affection that would go out to the poor and the needy. And all the social purposes and endeavors of the world and of the government will never rectify the moral and the spiritual, as well as the physical conditions of society. Never.

And that world, please my fellow believer look, your love and my love for that world can be a great hindrance to showing my love to my fellow believer. We found in chapter two, what John said in verse 15 and 16, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Can I speak? Well, may I raise the question? I've already suggested it, but what is the world? What is the world? What is the world? When Christians love one another, it condemns the world.

And that world as we well know, as we've just suggested, it is that world system under Satan, whereby men are seeking to produce and find happiness and prosperity without God. And may I say very lovingly, earnestly, there are too many worldly Christians. And one of the great hindrances to the expression of Christian love in its proper proportion, is that too many believers have their affection upon the world, and the things of the world.

It is a great hindrance. We'll see as we go along, what God would have before our hearts. In other words, as John said in chapter two, if my heart is set on the world, if my heart is set on the things of the world, I'm not in the enjoyment of my Father's love.

And if the world has its place in my affection, please may I say, if the world has its place in my affection, I am also being hindered to show my affection to my brother and sister as I should. It can be a great hindrance. And may I lovingly say, I often think there may be many who are building up the world system under Satan, even though they're Christians.

May I ask you the question, what does God say about the world? What did James write, the friendship of this world is enmity to God. This world crucified the Lord Jesus, the Lord of life and glory. And I want to be very frank, if I'm going to love my brother and sister and manifest true love, I'm not to let the world with its interests, with all that it contains, hinder me from doing so.

I've got to overcome that world. That's why John says, whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. Now I want to point out something.

Don't ever say you cannot overcome. You may be able to say, I will not, or I do not. I think of dear old brother Alfred Mace making the statement, every believer possesses the overcoming life.

You have it stated here, whatsoever nor whosoever is born of God, it is that indwelling life that we have received, is the overcoming life. We possess it, and we need to demonstrate it. He that believeth, as you go on, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even ours.

Please let me point out, as we go to the fifth verse in our closing thought, the object of our faith must not be the world, but it is our faith placed in the proper person and in the right direction that will overcome the world for us. Let me quote the words of Jesus, how precious, John 16, 33. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

And my fellow believer, may I make an earnest plea, that the person of Christ be before our hearts alone, in all of his glory and greatness, goodness, majesty, and the revelation of his great person from beginning to the end, in the word of God. Let that be the occupation of your heart and my heart. The statement was made by one to an older believer, servant of God, I'd give the world if I knew my Bible like you do.

And he answered, that's just what I paid. My fellow believer, frankly, I'm going to say it faithfully, I'm in love, I look at my brethren around the country, and I have had some of them come to me personally and say, Brother Bramhall, my business keeps me so occupied, I'm losing ground spiritually. The affairs, even

the legitimate affairs of the world, become a hindrance to fellowship with God.

Oh, what a test it is. What a difficulty. But it can be overcome, even by our faith.

That overcome, now note verse five, and here's what I want to make the matter in its climax, a crucial test. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? Now, we have noted at the beginning of this chapter, as well as yesterday and the other chapters, that the beloved apostle, he made it very clear that if any man believed that Jesus was the Christ, he was the same person. Jesus is the Christ, he was the same person.

That that Jesus was the Jehoshua of the Old Testament, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and that he was Christ the anointed, and we believed upon him, and we were born again. We were brought into the family of God. Now, you note particularly, and I emphasize this, John is not speaking in the fifth verse of this fourth chapter, of the fifth chapter, of Jesus as the Christ.

He did at the beginning of the chapter. But he says, who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is who? The Son of God. May I find out for you that matchless divine title of his deity and of his glory goes back into the eternity past? The eternal word, the eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus in the bosom of the Father in ages past.

Who he is? My beloved, may I say, I'm going to confess it, I have to confess it. When I was saved, the only conception, blessed as it was, that I had of Jesus, he was my savior. I thank God for it.

But as I stand before you today, oh, the greatness of his person, how the revelation of who he is and what he is grows as an intimacy and fellowship with God in his word by the Spirit, he magnifies the person of Christ, the eternal Son of God. He was the Son of God before the world ever began. He was the Son of God before he ever came to the earth.

He was the Son of God when he was on the earth. He still is the Son of God, and blessed be his name, he is both God and man forever, and forever he will be the eternal Son of God. And I'm sure you'll agree with me that when you read John's writings, particularly his gospel, that is the divine emphasis.

The deity, the greatness of his person, and the glory of his person, why should he mention it in this manner? I'll tell you why. It is because he is telling us that Christ, the Son of God, is great enough to fill your heart and mind without needing this world. The world cannot fill my, the world cannot minister Christ to my soul.

Beloved, the person of the Christ, enfolding every grace, Jesus, the Son of God, thou art enough, O Christ, the mind and the heart to fill. And this is indeed, as the apostle writes, this is the one who overcomes the dangers, the difficulties of the world that would hinder me in my fellowship with the Father, that would hinder me in my fellowship with his people, and with his Son, Christ, filled mother. And beloved, there's no room for the world, there's no room for the devil, there's no room for the flesh.

When Christ, the Son of God, in his great glory, will fill the heart, we will be with fellowship with the Father, with his Son, and with one another. O beloved, thank God for the person of Christ. And God grant that you and I, by God's grace, will have our hearts filled with himself, shall we pray? Blessed Father, we thank thee for thy beloved Son.

O how we rejoice in the greatness of his glory, whether we go back in the ages before time ever began, whether we come down the corridor of time in the Old Testament revelation, and when we look at him when he came to the earth, we beheld his glory, said John, the glorious of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. When we look at him on the throne of glory now, following his death and burial and resurrection, and ascension to glory above, how great he is. When we look at him coming again in the power and majesty of his kingdom, blessed Lord, thou art more than enough to fill these little hearts of us.

We humbly pray, but earnestly, fill our heart, Lord Jesus, with thyself, and all other things will fall into proper perspective. Hear our prayer and receive our thanks for thy divine encouragement in thy worthy name, as we ask it all for thy glory. Amen.

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