

Homily 10 1 John 5:1-3

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in Christ and love as the work of faith, highlighting that the love of God is to keep His commandments.

Scripture: Galatians 5:6

Topics: "Faith And Love", "Body Of Christ"

Description

St. Augustine preaches about the importance of believing in Jesus Christ and the inseparable connection between faith and love. He emphasizes that true faith is evidenced by love and obedience to God's commandments. St. Augustine highlights the significance of loving both God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, as a demonstration of our love for the entire Body of Christ. He explains that loving the sons of God is equivalent to loving God Himself, as they are all part of the same Body of Christ.

Transcript

Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loves Him that begot Him, loves Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, because we love God, and do His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments.

1. I Suppose ye remember, those of you who were present yesterday, to what place in the course of this epistle our exposition has reached: namely, He that loves not his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he sees not? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God, love his brother also. 1 John 4:20-21 Thus far we discoursed. Let us see then what comes next in order. Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. 1 John 5:1 Who is he that believes not that Jesus is the Christ?

He that does not so live as Christ commanded. For many say, I believe: but faith without works saves not. Now the work of faith is Love, as Paul the apostle says, And faith which works by love. Galatians 5:6 Your past works indeed, before you believed, were either none, or if they seemed good, were nothing worth. For if they were none, you were as a man without feet, or with sore feet unable to walk: but if they seemed good, before you believed, you ran indeed, but by running aside from the way you went astray instead of coming to the goal.

It is for us, then, both to run, and to run in the way. He that runs aside from the way, runs to no purpose, or rather runs but to toil. He goes the more astray, the more he runs aside from the way. What is the way by

which we run? Christ has told us, I am the Way. John 14:6 What the home to which we run? I am the Truth. By Him you run, to Him you run, in Him you rest. But, that we might run by Him, He reached even unto us: for we were afar off, foreigners in a far country. Not enough that we were in a far country, we were feeble also that we could not stir.

A Physician, He came to the sick: a Way, He extended Himself to them that were in a far country. Let us be saved by Him, let us walk in Him. This it is to believe that Jesus is the Christ, as Christians believe, who are not Christians only in name, but in deeds and in life, not as the devils believe. For the devils also believe and tremble, James 2:19 as the Scripture tells us. What more could the devils believe, than that they should say, We know who you are, the Son of God?

What the devils said, the same said Peter also. When the Lord asked them who He was, and whom did men say that He was, the disciples made answer to Him, Some say that you are John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He says unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Matthew 16:13-18 And this he heard from the Lord: Blessed are you, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.

See what praises follow this faith. You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. What means, Upon this rock I will build my Church? Upon this faith; upon this that has been said, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Upon this rock, says He, I will build my Church. Mighty praise! So then, Peter says, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God: the devils also say, We know who you are, the Son of God, the Holy One of God. This Peter said, this also the devils: the words the same, the mind not the same.

And how is it clear that Peter said this with love? Because a Christian's faith is with love, but a devil's without love. How without love? Peter said this, that he might embrace Christ; the devils said it, that Christ might depart from them. For before they said, We know who you are, the Son of God, they said, What have we to do with you? Why are you come to destroy us before the time? It is one thing then to confess Christ that you may hold Christ, another thing to confess Christ that you may drive Christ from you.

So then ye see, that in the sense in which he here says, Whoso believes, it is a faith of one's own, not as one has a faith in common with many. Therefore, brethren, let none of the heretics say to you, We also believe. For to this end have I given you an instance from the case of devils, that you may not rejoice in the words of believing, but search well the deeds of the life.

2. Let us see then what it is to believe in Christ; what to believe that Jesus, He is the Christ. He proceeds: Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. But what is it to believe that? And every one that loves Him that begot Him, loves Him also that is begotten of Him. To faith he has straightway joined love, because faith without love is nothing worth. With love, the faith of a Christian; without love, the faith of a devil: but those who believe not, are worse than devils, more stupid than devils. Some man will not believe in Christ: so far, he is not even upon a par with devils. A person does now believe in Christ, but hates Christ: he has the confession of faith in the fear of punishment, not in love of the crown: thus the devils also feared to be punished. Add to this faith love, that it may become a faith such as the Apostle Paul speaks of, a faith which works by love: Galatians 5:6 you have found a Christian, found a citizen of Jerusalem, found a fellow-citizen of the angels, found a pilgrim sighing in the way: join yourself to him, he is your fellow-traveller, run with him, if indeed you also art this. Every one that loves Him that begot Him, loves Him also that is begotten of Him. Who begot? The Father. Who is begotten? The Son. What says he

then? Every one that loves the Father, loves the Son.

3. In this we know that we love the sons of God. 1 John 4:2 What is this, brethren? Just now he was speaking of the Son of God, not of sons of God: lo, here one Christ was set before us to contemplate, and we were told, Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loves Him that begot, i.e. the Father, loves Him also that is begotten of Him, i.e. the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And he goes on: In this we know that we love the sons of God; as if he had been about to say, In this we know that we love the Son of God.

He has said, the sons of God, whereas he was speaking just before of the Son of God-- because the sons of God are the Body of the Only Son of God, and when He is the Head, we the members, it is one Son of God. Therefore, he that loves the sons of God, loves the Son of God, and he that loves the Son of God, loves the Father; nor can any love the Father except he love the Son, and he that loves the sons, loves also the Son of God. What sons of God? The members of the Son of God.

And by loving he becomes himself a member, and comes through love to be in the frame of the body of Christ, so there shall be one Christ, loving Himself. For when the members love one another, the body loves itself. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Corinthians 12:26-27 And then he goes on to say, Now you are the body of Christ, and members. John was speaking just before of brotherly love, and said, He that loves not his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he sees not? 1 John 4:20 But if you love your brother, haply you love your brother and lovest not Christ?

How should that be, when you love members of Christ? When therefore you love members of Christ, you love Christ; when you love Christ, you love the Son of God; when you love the Son of God, you love also the Father. The love therefore cannot be separated into parts. Choose what you will love; the rest follow you. Suppose you say, I love God alone, God the Father. You are lying: if you love, you love Him not alone; but if you love the Father, you love also the Son. Behold, do you say, I love the Father, and I love the Son: but this only, the Father God and the Son God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, that Word by which all things were made, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us: this alone I love.

You are lying; for if you love the Head, you love also the members; but if you love not the members, neither do you love the Head. Do you not quake at the voice uttered by the Head from Heaven on behalf of His members, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME? Acts 9:4 The persecutor of His members He called His persecutor: His lover, the lover of His members. Now what are His members, you know, brethren: none other than the Church of God. In this we know that we love the sons of God, in that we love God.

And how? Are not the sons of God one thing, God Himself another? But he that loves God, loves His precepts. And what are the precepts of God? A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another. John 13:34 Let none excuse himself by another love, for another love; so and so only is it with this love: as the love itself is compacted in one, so all that hang by it does it make one, and as fire melts them down into one. It is gold: the lump is molten and becomes some one thing. But unless the fervor of charity be applied, of many there can be no melting down into one. That we love God, by this know we that we love the sons of God.

4. And by what do we know that we love the sons of God? By this, that we love God, and do His commandments. We sigh here, by reason of the hardness of doing the commandments of God. Hear what

follows. O man, at what do you toil in loving? In loving avarice. With toil is that loved which you love: there is no toil in loving God. Avarice will enjoin you labors, perils, sore hardships and tribulations; and you will do its bidding. To what end? That you may have that with which you shall fill your chest, and lose your peace of mind. You felt yourself haply more secure before you had it, than since you began to have. See what avarice has enjoined you. You have filled your house, and art in dread of robbers; hast gotten gold, lost your sleep. See what avarice has enjoined you. Do, and you did. What does God enjoin you! Love me. You love gold, you will seek gold, and perchance not find it: whoever seeks me, I am with him. You will love honor, and perchance not attain unto it: who ever loved me, and did not attain? God says to you, you would make you a patron, or a powerful friend: you seek a way to his favor by means of another inferior. Love me, says God to you: favor with me is not had by making interest with some other: your love itself makes me present to you. What sweeter than this love, brethren? It is not without reason that you heard just now in the Psalm, The unrighteous told me of delights, but not as is Your law, O Lord. What is the Law of God? The commandment of God. What is the commandment of God? That new commandment, which is called new because it makes new: A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another. John 13:34 Hear because this is the law of God. The apostle says, Bear ye one another's burdens, and so shall you fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 This, even this, is the consummation of all our works; Love. In it is the end: for this we run: to it we run; when we have come to it, we shall rest.

5. You have heard in the Psalm, I have seen the end of all perfection. He has said, I have seen the end of all perfection: what had he seen? Think we, had he ascended to the peak of some very high and pointed mountain, and looked out thence and seen the compass of the earth, and the circles of the round world, and therefore said, I have seen the end of all perfection? If this be a thing to be praised, let us ask of the Lord eyes of the flesh so sharp-sighted, that we shall but require some exceeding high mountain on earth, that from its summit we may see the end of all perfection.

Go not far: lo, I say to you, it is here; ascend the mountain, and see the end. Christ is the Mountain; come to Christ: you see thence the end of all perfection. What is this end? Ask Paul: But the end of the commandment is charity, from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned: 1 Timothy 1:5 and in another place, Charity is the fullness, or fulfillment, of the law. What so finished and terminated as fullness? For, brethren, the apostle here uses end in a way of praise.

Think not of consumption, but of consummation. For it is in one sense that one says, I have finished my bread, in another, I have finished my coat. I have finished the bread, by eating it: the coat, by making it. In both places the word is end, finish: but the bread is finished by its being consumed, the coat is finished by being made: the bread, so as to be no more; the coat, so as to be complete. Therefore in this sense take ye also this word, end, when the Psalm is read and you hear it said, On the end, a Psalm of David.

You are for ever hearing this in the Psalms, and you should know what ye hear. What means, On the end?-- For Christ is the end of the law unto every one that believes. Romans 13:10 And what means, Christ is the end? Because Christ is God, and the end of the commandment is charity, and Charity is God: because Father and Son and Holy Ghost are One. There is He the End to you; elsewhere He is the Way. Do not stick fast in the way, and so never come to the end. Whatever else you come to, pass beyond it, until you come to the end.

What is the end? It is good for me to hold me fast in God. Have you laid fast hold on God? You have finished the way: you shall abide in your own country. Mark well! Some man seeks money: let not it be the end to you: pass on, as a traveller in a strange land. But if you love it, you are entangled by avarice;

avarice will be shackles to your feet: you can make no more progress. Pass therefore this also: seek the end. You seek health of the body: still do not stop there. For what is it, this health of the body, which death makes an end of, which sickness debilitates, a feeble, mortal, fleeting thing?

Seek that, indeed, lest haply ill-health hinder your good works: but for that very reason, the end is not there, for it is sought in order to something else. Whatever is sought in order to something else, the end is not there: whatever is loved for its own sake, and freely, the end is there. You seek honors; perchance seekest them in order to do something, that you may accomplish something, and so please God: love not the honor itself, lest you stop there. Do you seek praise?

If you seek God's, you do well; if you seek your own, you do ill; you stop short in the way. But behold, you are loved, art praised: think it not joy when in yourself you are praised; be praised in the Lord, that you may sing, In the Lord shall my soul be praised. Thou deliverest some good discourse, and your discourse is praised. Let it not be praised as yours, the end is not there. If you set the end there, there is an end of you: but an end, not that you be perfected, but that you be consumed.

Then let not your discourse be praised as coming from you, as being yours. But how praised? As the Psalm says, In God will I praise the discourse, in God will I praise the word. Hereby shall that which there follows come to pass in you: In God have I hoped, I will not fear what man can do unto me. For when all things that are yours are praised in God, no fear lest your praise be lost, since God fails not. Pass therefore this also.

6. See, brethren, how many things we pass, in which is not the end. These we use as by the way; we take as it were our refreshment at the halting places on our journey, and pass on. Where then is the end? Beloved, we are sons of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be; 1 John 3:2 here is this said, in this epistle. As yet then, we are on the way; as yet, wherever we come, we must pass on, until we attain unto some end. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. That is the end; there perpetual praising, there Alleluia always without fail. This, then is the end he has spoken of in the Psalm: I have seen the end of all perfection: and as though it were said to him, What is the end you have seen? Your commandment, exceeding broad. This is the end: the breadth of the commandment. The breadth of the commandment is charity, because where charity is, there are no straits. In this breadth, this wide room, was the apostle when he said, Our mouth is open to you, O you Corinthians, our heart is enlarged: you are not straitened in us. 2 Corinthians 6:11-12 In this, then, is Your commandment exceeding broad. What is the broad commandment? A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another. Charity, then, is not straitened. Would you not be straitened here on earth? Dwell in the broad room. For whatever man may do to you, he shall not straiten you; because you love that which man cannot hurt: lovest God, lovest the brotherhood, lovest the law of God, lovest the Church of God: it shall be for ever. Thou laborest here on earth, but you shall come to the promised enjoyment. Who can take from you that which you love? If no man can take from you that which you love, secure you sleep, or rather secure you watch, lest by sleeping you lose that which you love. For not without reason is it said, Enlighten my eyes, lest at any time I sleep in death. They that shut their eyes against charity, fall asleep in the lusts of carnal delights. Be wakeful, therefore. For then are the delights, to eat, to drink, to wanton in luxury, to play, to hunt; these vain pomps all evils follow. Are we ignorant that they are delights? Who can deny that they delight? But more beloved is the law of God. Cry against such persuaders: The unrighteous have told me of delights: but not so as is your law, O Lord. This delight remains. Not only remains as the goal to which you may come, but also calls you back when you flee.

7. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. 1 John 4:3 Already you have heard, On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. See how He would not have you divide yourself over a multitude of pages: On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. On what two commandments? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40 See here of what commandments this whole epistle talks. Therefore hold fast love, and set your minds at rest. Why do you fear lest you do evil to some man? Who does evil to the man he loves? Love : it is impossible to do this without doing good. But it may be, you rebuke. Kindness does it, not fierceness. But it may be thou beatest. For discipline you do this; because your kindness of love will not let you leave him undisciplined. And indeed there come somehow these different and contrary results, that sometimes hatred uses winning ways, and charity shows itself fierce.

A person hates his enemy, and feigns friendship for him: he sees him doing some evil, he praises him: he wishes him to go headlong, wishes him to go blind over the precipice of his lusts, haply never to return; he praises him, For the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul; he applies to him the unction of adulation; behold, he hates, and praises. Another sees his friend doing something of the same sort; he calls him back; if he will not hear, he uses words even of castigation, he scolds, he quarrels: there are times when it comes to this, that one must even quarrel!

Behold, hatred shows itself winningly gentle, and charity quarrels! Stay not your regard upon the words of seeming kindness, or the seeming cruelty of the rebuke; look into the vein they come from; seek the root whence they proceed. The one is gentle and bland that he may deceive, the other quarrels that he may correct. Well then, it is not for us, brethren, to enlarge your heart: obtain from God the gift to love one another. Love all men, even your enemies, not because they are your brethren, but that they may be your brethren; that you may be at all times on fire with brotherly love, whether toward him that has become your brother, or towards your enemy, so that, by being beloved, he may become your brother.

Wheresoever ye love a brother, you love a friend. Now is he with you, now is he knit to you in unity, yea catholic unity. If you are living aright, you love a brother made out of an enemy. But you love some man who has not yet believed Christ, or, if he have believed, believes as do the devils: you rebuke his vanity. Love, and that with a brotherly love: he is not yet a brother, but you love to the end he may be a brother. Well then, all our love is a brotherly love, towards Christians, towards all His members.

The discipline of charity, my brethren, its strength, flowers, fruit, beauty, pleasantness, food, drink, meat, embracing, has in it no satiety. If it so delight us while in a strange land, in our own country how shall we rejoice!

8. Let us run then, my brethren, let us run, and love Christ. What Christ? Jesus Christ. Who is He? The Word of God. And how came He to the sick? The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us. John 1:14 It is complete then, which the Scripture foretold, Christ must suffer, and rise again the third day from the dead. Luke 24:46 His body, where is it? His members, where toil they? Where must you be, that you may be under your Head? And that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name through all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke 24:47 There let your charity be spread abroad. Christ says, and the Psalm, i.e. the Spirit of God, Your commandment is exceeding broad: and forsooth some man will have charity to be confined to Africa! Extend your charity over the whole earth if you will love Christ, for Christ's members

are over all the earth. If you love but a part, you are divided: if you are divided, you are not in the body; if you are not in the body, you are not under the Head. What profits it you that you believe and blaspheme? Thou adorest Him in the Head, blaspheme Him in the Body. He loves His Body. If you have cut yourself off from His Body, the Head has not cut itself off from its Body. To no purpose do you honor me, cries your Head to you from on high, to no purpose do you honor me. It is all one as if a man would kiss your head and tread upon your feet: perchance with nailed boots he would crush your feet, while he will clasp your head and kiss it: would you not cry out in the midst of the words with which he honors you, and say, What are you doing, man? You tread on me. You would not mean, Thou treadest on my head; for the head he honored; but more would the head cry out for the members trodden upon, than for itself because it was honored. Does not the head itself cry out, I will none of yours honor; do not tread on me? Now say if you can, How have I trodden upon you? Say that to the head: I wanted to kiss you, I wanted to embrace you. But do you not see, O fool, that what you would embrace does in virtue of a certain unity, which knits the whole frame together, reach to that which you tread upon? Above you honor me, beneath you tread upon me. That on which you tread pains more than that which you honor rejoices. In what sort does the tongue cry out? It hurts me. It says not, It hurts my foot, but, It hurts me, says it. O tongue, who has touched you? Who has struck? Who has goaded? Who has pricked? No man, but I am knit together with the parts that are trodden upon. How would you have me not be pained, when I am not separate?

9. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, ascending into heaven on the fortieth day, did for this reason commend to us His Body where it would continue to lie, because He saw that many would honor Him for that He is ascended into heaven: and saw that their honoring Him is useless if they trample upon His members here on earth. And lest any one should err, and, while he adored the Head in heaven should trample upon the feet on earth, He told us where would be His members. For being about to ascend, He spoke His last words on earth: after those same words He spoke no more on earth.

The Head about to ascend into heaven commended to us His members on earth and departed. Thenceforth you find not Christ speaking on earth; you find Him speaking, but from heaven. And even from heaven, why? Because His members on earth were trodden upon. For to the persecutor Saul He said from on high, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Acts 9:4 I am ascended into heaven, but still I lie on earth: here I sit at the right hand of the Father, but there I yet hunger, thirst, and am a stranger.

In what manner then did He commend to us His Body, when about to ascend into heaven? When the disciples asked Him, saying, Lord, will you at this time present yourself, and when shall be the kingdom of Israel? Acts 1:6-8 He made answer, now at the point to depart, It is not for you to know the time which the Father has put in His own power: but you shall receive strength of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me. See where His Body is spread abroad, see where He will not be trodden upon: You shall be witnesses to me, unto Jerusalem, and unto Judea, and even unto all the earth.

Lo, where I lie that am ascending! For I ascend, because I am the Head: my Body lies yet beneath. Where lies? Throughout the whole earth. Beware you strike not, beware you hurt not, beware you trample not: these be the last words of Christ about to go into heaven. Look at a sick man languishing on his bed, lying in his house, and worn out with sickness, at death's door, his soul as it were even now between his teeth: who, anxious, it may be, about something that is dear to him, which he greatly loves, and it comes into his mind, calls his heirs, and says to them, I pray you, do this.

He, as it were, detains his soul by a violent effort, that it may not depart ere those words be made sure. When he has dictated those last words, he breathes out his soul, he is borne a corpse to the sepulchre.

His heirs, how do they remember the last words of the dying man? How, if one should stand up and say to them, Do it not: what would they say? What? Shall I not do that which my father, in the act of breathing out his soul, commanded me with his last breath, the last word of his that sounded in my ears when my father was departing this life?

Whatever other words of his I may not regard, his last have a stronger hold upon me: since which I never saw him more, never more heard speech of his. Brethren, think with Christian hearts; if to the heirs of a man, his words spoken when about to go to the tomb are so sweet, so grateful, so weighty, what must we account of the last words of Christ, spoken not when about to go back to the tomb, but to ascend into heaven! As for the man who lived and is dead, his soul is hurried off to other places, his body is laid in the earth, and whether these words of his be done or not, makes no difference to him: he has now something else to do, or something else to suffer: either in Abraham's bosom he rejoices, or in eternal fire he longs for a drop of water, while his corpse lies there senseless in the sepulchre; and yet the last words of the dying man are kept.

What have those to look for, who keep not the last words of Him that sits in heaven, who sees from on high whether they be despised or not despised? The words of Him, who said, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? who keeps account, unto the judgment, of all that He sees His members suffer?

10. And what have we done, say they? We are the persecuted, not the persecutors. You are the persecutors, O wretched men. In the first place, in that you have divided the Church. Mightier the sword of the tongue than the sword of steel. Agar, Sarah's maid, was proud, and she was afflicted by her mistress for her pride. That was discipline, not punishment. Accordingly, when she had gone away from her mistress, what said the angel to her? Return to your mistress. Genesis 16:4-9 Then, O carnal soul, like a proud bond-woman, suppose you have suffered any trouble for discipline' sake, why do you rave? Return to your mistress, hold fast the peace of the Church. Lo, the gospels are produced, we read where the Church is spread abroad: men dispute against us, and say to us, Betrayers! Betrayers of what? Christ commends to us His Church, and you believe not: shall I believe you, when you revile my parents? Would you that I should believe you about the betrayers? First believe Christ. What is worth believing? Christ is God, you are man: which ought to be believed first? Christ has spread His Church abroad over all the earth: I say it-- despise me: the gospel speaks-- beware. What says the gospel? It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name. Luke 24:47 Where remission of sins, there the Church is. How the Church? Why, to her it was said, To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Matthew 16:19 Where is this remission of sins spread abroad? Through all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Lo, believe Christ! But, because you are well aware that if you shall believe Christ, you will not have anything to say about betrayers, you will needs have me to believe you when you speak evil against my parents, rather than yourself believe what Christ foretold!

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