

Marks of True Children of God - Part 2

by William MacDonald

A true child of God is characterized by a supernatural love that demonstrates itself in obedience to God's commandments, compassion to those in need, and a willingness to give and forgive.

Duration: 42:29

Scripture: Hebrews 10:25, 1 John 2:15, 1 John 3:10-14, 1 John 3:17

Topics: "Children Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a mother who was willing to give both of her kidneys to save her son's life. The preacher emphasizes the importance of love and having a servant's spirit. They highlight the need to listen to the lessons that love teaches us and the difficulty of expressing love. The sermon also discusses the test of love and how it is a characteristic of a true believer who loves God.

Transcript

Would you turn in your Bibles, please, to 1 John, chapter 3, once again, and I'd like to read verses 10 through 18. 1 John, chapter 3, verses 10 through 18. In this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that he heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

And hereby we know that whereof the truth shall assure our hearts before him." I think we'll just stop there. For the benefit of those who weren't here this morning, we started a study on 1 John, and we mentioned

that John's purpose is to give the test of life, to give the mark that characterized those who are genuine Christians. The world has true Christians, the world has counterfeit Christians, nominal Christians, professing Christians, who don't have the root of the matter in them.

And it's very, very confusing today. I don't know if you get as confused as I. This is reading the newspaper and reading about all the born-again personalities. But I'm sorry to say that many of them don't.

They flunk the test. They flunk the test that John gives us in this letter. We mentioned this morning that one of the great tests of life is the test of sound doctrine.

A true believer is one who confesses Jesus Christ comes in the flesh. He confesses that Jesus is the Christ. He confesses that Jesus is the Son of God.

We saw this morning that the true believer does not practice sin. He has died to sin as master in his life. It's very confusing when you read in Romans chapter 6 about dying to sin, and you look within and, I sure haven't died to sin.

But what it really means is dying to sin as master. Sin no longer holds the whip hand in the life of the child of God. And we saw that this morning, that although the Christian does sin, sin is not the dominating tenor of his life.

But he does practice righteousness. This is the third test, and we saw that in verse 10. And this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. That is, whosoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. And then another test of life is that the true believer loves God, and he loves God's children.

He loves the people of God. And it says that in that same verse, neither he that loveth not his brother. I mentioned this morning that these tests of life are woven throughout the epistle.

John doesn't say, okay, now in this first paragraph we're going to talk about test number one, then we'll move on to test number, and take them consecutively through the epistle. He doesn't do that. He weaves them all the way through.

Notice verse 10. And this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness, that's a test, is not of God.

Neither he that loveth his brother. And they're woven all the way through. It's really a fabric, this epistle.

And I think there's a good reason for that, because we tend to compartmentalize things in our life. We say, well, last Tuesday I manifested love. But that isn't what John's saying.

John's saying, look, these tests should be woven in our lives, all of them, at all times. And I think that even the way he handles it here is inspired of God. Another test of life is that the child of God obeys the commandments of the Lord.

The New Testament is filled with commandments. We're not under law as a rule of life, but we are in laws to Christ. And the New Testament has many, many laws, the laws of Christ.

They're not law as in the Old Testament with penalty attacks, but they're instruction in righteousness for the people of God. Then we saw this morning, too, that a true believer does not forsake the Christian fellowship. He goes on faithfully to the end.

It doesn't mean, I'm not saying he doesn't leave one fellowship and go to another evangelical fellowship. That's not the point. But when the writer of the Hebrew says, not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together, he's thinking of something more serious than being absent from the prayer meeting one night.

Forsaking the assembly of ourselves together in that chapter really is apostatizing from the Christian faith, and a true believer does not do that. And then we saw this morning, too, that a true believer does not love the world or the things that are in this world. The world is a passing shadow.

The world passeth away, the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. And the Christian, a true believer, has better sense than to spend his life chasing bubbles and concentrating on atomic tiddlywinks or underwater basket weaving. There's more to life than that.

Now, the test that we want to think about this afternoon is the test of love. The test of love. And I can feel you all settling back in your chairs and saying, well, thank God, we're all loving and we're all kind and there won't be anything uncomfortable this afternoon.

A true believer loves God. And that's an interesting thing. Sometime when you're dealing with unsaved people, you might ask them the question, do you love God? And you know, they might have cardiac arrest.

You know why? Well, because they love TV, and they love their souped-up sport model car, and they love a spaghetti feed, but the idea of loving God never entered their head. When my brother was a little boy, he spoke to a young man, about 30, who lived in the middle flat in our house. And my brother came running into my mother.

She said, what's the matter? And my brother said, Arthur Hammond doesn't love God. Apparently he had asked Arthur, do you love God? And he said, I don't even know him. And it broke my brother down.

As a little boy, he came running into my mother, and he said, Arthur Hammond doesn't love God. A true Christian loves God. That's a distinguishing mark.

So, look into your heart this afternoon. I don't know who's here. Do you love God? Not only that, but a true child of God loves the people of God.

We know that we have passed from death to life, verse 14 of chapter 3, because we love the brethren. This was very real in my life after I was saved, because I can honestly tell you that was the time I was saved. Christians annoyed me.

They annoyed me especially at the end of the meeting when they'd come and buttonhole me, and say, what about it, fella? You're saved? And I won't tell you the unkind thoughts that raced through my mind at that moment. Why don't they leave me alone? What business is it of theirs? Talk to me about it. I really resented it very deeply.

But, you know, after I had broken at the foot of the cross, and after God dealt with me for that rotten, stinking pride, I had a whole new attitude toward believers, and I have had ever since. The cream of the

earth has been my privilege to travel rather widely, and everywhere I've gone I've met the excellence of the earth, and every one of them trying to the utmost of their ability to show me the kindness of God for Jesus' sake. And I'll tell you, that's more than the Masons can offer, or any other fraternity.

It's a wonderful thing to be a Christian, to be a child of God, and to be in that glorious fellowship, God's great society. But, did you notice verse 17 of chapter 3? Love is manifested in sharing what we have with those who are in need. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his vows of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? To me, this is one of the most discomfoting, unsettling, revolutionary verses in the entire Bible.

And it's wonderful how we can put it on our bed tables at night, and sleep comfortably beside it. It's even more wonderful how radio celebrities can come on, and teach that it's God's will for all Christians to be rich. And if you'll just send in your money to this program, God will bless you with earthly riches, and you'll see your bank account growing by leaps and bounds.

I don't know why Christians go to such pain to defend earthly riches when Jesus didn't have a good word to say about them. He said, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. But I realize that this is a very sensitive subject.

The most sensitive part of modern man's anatomy is his pocketbook. And you can talk about a lot of other subjects, and people can be comfortable, but you start talking about my pocketbook, brother, you're treading on thin ice. Well, don't be angry with me.

I didn't say it. Jesus said it through the Apostle John. Whoso has this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? And I have to face that question.

And I want to tell you today, there are serious moral problems connected with accumulating wealth in a world like ours, in a world where there are 7,000 people who die daily of starvation, and over half the world has never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, please tell me how I can lay up treasures on earth in a world like that. I have in my possession today the most wonderful earthly possession I could have, the Word of God, the most wonderful, tangible, earthly possession I could have, God's precious Word.

Look, if I love my neighbors as myself, I'm not going to be satisfied until they have it, too. Isn't that right? And when I think about all those earthly riches that could be accomplishing for God, they turn sour in my stomach. To me, this is very, very unsettling, and I think it's something that we simply have to face.

And please don't come to me and tell me how wonderful it is to see rich Christians in a world of hunger. I don't think it's wonderful at all. I love what Denny said about my Lord.

He said, He said, I think that's beautiful. Imagine the Lord of life and glory coming down to this planet and going through life a poorer man than he was. And he came to the end of the journey, and he had owned nothing and left nothing but the clothes that he wore.

I want to be like Jesus. Do you? And not only so, but John tells us, too, that if we love, if we have this New Testament love, it will manifest itself in many other ways in our lives, and we're going to be thinking about some of those ways. Love as it's used in the New Testament is a supernatural love.

It's an otherworldly love. It's something I cannot do in the power of the flesh. It's something that an unsaved person can't do at all, and a Christian can only do it by divine enablement.

It requires divine life, the love that we're speaking about. And incidentally, it's not a matter of the emotions only, which is the conception most people have of love. They think it's emotions.

It's something you catch like a common cold or something like that. That's not New Testament love. New Testament love is more a matter of the will.

I'm commanded to love. If it were a matter of the emotions, you can't command emotions. I'm grouchy or I'm happy.

You don't command that. But it's a matter of the will. I'm commanded to love is the word of God.

New Testament love is to be distinguished from lust. When people in the world today think of love, they think of Hollywood, and when you think of Hollywood, you think of lust with Harlot parading across the screen. People go to feed on that.

Lust never builds a lasting relationship. Love does. Lust cannot wait to get.

Love cannot wait to give. I think that's one of the most helpful things to remember. We've already had brought before us by Brother Nicholson, love manifests itself in giving.

Almost, well, not always, but many times in the New Testament, where you have the word love, you have the word forms of giving. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

If I want to manifest love to others, I manifest it by giving. Love ever gives, forgives, outlives, and ever stands with open hands, and while it lives, it gives. So, this is love's prerogative to give, and give, and give.

I think there's a lovely thought in Ephesians chapter four, where you have the revolution of love in a man's life. He starts out a crook, and he gets converted, and he becomes a philanthropist. It says, "...steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands, that he may have to give to anyone that has need." That's a wonderful verse of Scripture.

Here's a man that was a thief. "...let him that stole, steal no longer, but rather let him labor," not just to provide for food for himself and his family, and something to give to the work of the Lord, not just that. "...rather let him labor with his hands, a thing that is good, that he may have to give to anyone that has need." Now, that's a revolutionary thought, isn't it? I wonder how many of us work in order to have money to give, to alleviate human need.

I've known many, many Christians who did that. Christians who worked through the summer didn't have to. They purposely worked during the summer, or in stores at Christmas holidays, and the only purpose for their working was to have money to send to the mission field.

That's New Testament. It really is New Testament. Love thinks of others, not of self.

Love is others-oriented. Of course, the great example is our Lord himself, Philippians chapter 2. He made himself of no reputation. He emptied himself.

He thought of others. What a wonderful thing. I think the most miserable people in the world today are people who are self-centered.

I think most of the people, not all, but most of the people who are in vasty cases in psychiatric clinics today are suffering from an enormous overdose of vitamin I. They really do have eye trouble. They're afflicted with a perpendicular pronoun. The greatest deliverance is to be the deliverance from the bondage of self, where we pour ourselves out in lives of service for others.

But, you know, New Testament love even goes beyond that, and I think this is a wonderful thing. New Testament love goes out to enemies as well as friends. When Lincoln was president, he had an enemy named Stanton.

Stanton called Lincoln the original gorilla. He said there was no reason to go to Africa for a gorilla when you could find one in Springfield, Illinois. And Lincoln took it.

And later in the war, when he needed a war minister, he appointed Stanton. And his friend said, What did you ever do that for? He said, Because he was the man most qualified for the job. The night that Lincoln was assassinated, Stanton stood by his corpse and said, There lies the greatest leader of men.

Love had conquered. Love goes out to the unlovely as well as to the lovely. The world doesn't know anything about this.

But God has given us a wonderful example in his dealings with us, and he wants us to imitate it in our lives. Another beautiful thing about love is that it doesn't keep a count of wrongs. This speaks very loudly to me, because it's so natural to do this.

I remember that he did this to me. Clara Barton, who founded the American Red Cross, a lady said to her once, Clara, don't you remember the nasty thing that woman said about you? She said, Not only I don't remember, I distinctly remember forgetting. Good, when we can distinctly remember forgetting wrongs that have been done against us.

When George Washington Carver was a young man, he was black, and when he was a young man, he was refused admission to a university here in our country. And in later years, a subject came up, and somebody said to George Washington Carver, What was the name of that university? And he said, It doesn't matter. Some of you have read the writings of Kari Ten Boom.

I must say, they've been a tremendous blessing to me. Kari Ten Boom, who was in internment camp during the Nazi occupation. And she was talking to a Christian brother one time, and she was telling about a wrong that had been committed.

She said, Of course, I've forgotten it. I've forgiven and I've forgotten it. He said, Are you sure it was a wrong committed against you? She said, I have a letter to prove it.

But he said, You know, if you have a letter to prove it, you haven't forgiven, and you haven't forgotten. And you know, that hit me very, very hard, because I had a letter at home. When I read that, I remembered a very rough patch I went through in life.

And I remember a letter that had been written to me, and I want to tell you, there was the evidence in black and white. I mean, it was most condemning to the man who wrote the letter. I thought, I'll keep that.

In case I ever need evidence, there it is, and I tucked it away in my file. And then I read this letter by, this article by Corrie Ten Boom. You know, and God really barbecued me about that.

He really did. And I didn't have any rest until I went and got that letter out of the file and shredded it. You know, I've never missed it.

And I've never had occasion to use it either. God's way is the best way, isn't it? Love doesn't keep account of wrongs. Anybody here holding the evidence that all your gastric juices are turning to sulfuric acid as you think about it? There's a better way.

Jesus' way. Tear it up. Get rid of the evidence.

Don't keep account of wrongs. Love doesn't do that. And love doesn't count the cost either.

And it would be impossible even to say that without thinking of the Lord Jesus and thinking of the price He paid in manifesting His love to us. It must have been wonderful love. How greatly Jesus must have loved us to bear our sins in His body on the tree.

And He wants us to manifest that kind of a love, the love that doesn't count cost. A love that's willing to lay down its life for the object of its love. You know, that brings me up short, too.

It says in that passage we read, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Can you think of anyone today you'd be willing to die for? I mean, die! Can you think of anyone that you'd really count it a joy to give up your life for? Some years ago there was a dear young brother in Turkey. He was a true believer in the Lord Jesus and he was afflicted with a terrible kidney ailment.

And if he couldn't get a transplant, he was going to die. And they took him to England. In fact, I had the joy of visiting him in a hospital there in England before the operation.

And they brought his mother, the nearest one who could give, whose kidneys were similar enough with his mother. They brought her, an uneducated woman from Turkey. And you know, that dear mother came to England with the idea that when she gave a kidney she would die.

She didn't know that she could live. So that was explained to her. No, you don't have to die.

You can give a kidney and you can still go on living. And so then, before they went ahead, the doctor said to her, Are you willing, are you glad to give a kidney for your son Canaan? She said, I'll give two kidneys for his mother's love. That's wonderful, isn't it? Really wonderful.

I'll give two kidneys. She only had to give one. And it gave Canaan a few extra years of life, but then God called him home.

Love sees things to be done, and does them without being asked. This is good. Young people, are you listening? Love sees things to be done, and does them without being asked.

It's wonderful, really, to have a servant spirit. The man who has that is a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I used to say, love takes out the garbage without being asked.

But too many husbands complain about sore sides where their wives have jabbed them during the meeting. So I had to stop saying that. Love repays insults with kindness.

That's supernatural. You and I can't do that in the energy. When we are insulted, all our reflex actions are ready to pop like a tiger.

Are you like that? But love doesn't react that way. Love reacts by showing kindness, by repaying every discourtesy with love. And love doesn't retaliate or give tit for tat.

I'm going to read you something from E. Stanley Jones. Love your enemy, turn the other cheek, and go the second mile when compelled to go on. Impossible idealism.

You'd be everybody's doormat. Everyone would walk on you, wouldn't they? The aim of a quarrel is to get rid of your enemy. Supposing you strike back and give blow for blow.

Do you get rid of your enemy? You fix the enmity by every blow you give. By turning the other cheek, you disarm your enemy. He hits you on the cheek, and you, by your moral audacity, hit him on the heart by turning the other cheek.

I like that. He hits you on the cheek, and you, by your moral audacity, hit him on the heart by turning the other cheek. His enmity is dissolved.

Your enemy is gone. You get rid of your enemy by getting rid of your enmity. A Hindu said to Jones, why didn't, when Jesus was on trial and they struck him, why didn't he strike back? Didn't he have the right to strike back? And E. Stanley Jones said, I suppose he did, but suppose he had struck back.

I wouldn't be talking about him tonight. If he had struck back, I never would have looked at him again. He's like me, I would have said, and I never would have looked at him again, nor would anyone else in the world have ever looked at him again.

But he turned the other cheek, and the blow falls on your heart and mine. The world is at the feet of the man, capital M. The world is at the feet of the man who had power to strike back, but who had power not to strike back. That is the ultimate power, the power that wins.

Love gives and lends without any hope of repayment. This is so removed from anything the world thinks about today. And I really feel in my heart of hearts that in many ways we could almost take a moratorium on evangelism, and if we just started living the life of love before people, we'd see people run to the Lord.

I really, I may be wrong on this, correct me if I'm wrong, I really think more people are won through kindness than through words. And what a revolution it would be if God's people, of all of them, I include myself, if God's people would just start living this life before the world. The world is dying for a little bit of love.

Love is patient, not given to temper. Many of us have a very short fuse, I'm afraid, sorry to say, but love isn't like that. And love hides the failures of others.

I was talking with my friend George Verwer once, and he was about to share with me a choice morsel about some mutual friend. And George stopped right in the middle of his sentence, and he said, No, that wouldn't be edifying. And I've been dying with curiosity ever since.

But it was a wonderful lesson for me, just the same. No, he said, that wouldn't be edifying. And it was wonderful to be able to suck words back when they were halfway out of his mouth.

Love, that's what love is like. Love is courteous. It says in 1 Corinthians 13, it does not behave itself unseemly.

Love doesn't make cutting remarks about other people. The world really, it's amazing the sharpness of the tongue of some of the people of the world. One woman said to another, did you hear that Elsie is sick? And she says, I hope it's nothing trivial.

What a terrible thing to say. Or I think of Lady Astor, who said to Winston Churchill, Mr. Churchill, if I were married to you, I'd put poison in your coffee. He said, Lady Astor, if I were married to you, I'd drink it.

If you put those words in the mouths of Christians, they're quite out of place, aren't they? It's a bad frame. It's a bad scene. That's the world, and love is not like that.

Love is better than spectacular gifts. It's a wonderful thing to see a man who's gifted by the Spirit of God in a very special way. It's been my privilege through life to sit under the ministry of many, many men like that.

I could recite their names to you. But I'll tell you there's something greater than great gift, and that's great grace. See, as I might be able to get up and hold the audience in the palm of my hand and be a perfect spellbinder, and just be a perfect grouch to live with at home, that's no good.

It's no good. Grace is better than gift. Love is better than spectacular gift.

And love is a conquering power. In one of Aesop's fables, there was a contest between the sun and the wind over which one could make a man take off his overcoat first. And the wind blew furiously, but the more it blew, the more he tied his coat tightly around him.

Then the sun shone down on him, and he took off his coat. It was the warmth that did it. And the warmth of Christian love can do that.

We can change people through warmth. Love is like that. I have friends up in Napa, California, Red and May Williams, and they had an Irish setter, and that Irish setter was one of the most affectionate dogs I've ever known.

He's known as a leaner. You'd go in the house, and that dog came and just would put its head against your leg and just lean on you. And one day, in fact, the house was broken into, and I guess the dog gave the thieves a royal welcome because when the Williams came home, the dog was just shut off in the kitchen as if nothing had happened and all their things were gone.

So they said, we're going to take care of that. And so they got a German shepherd, Elfie. And we were given straight orders when we went to visit the Williams, don't have Elfie.

Elfie's going to be a man-eater. Elfie's got to be fierce and wild, and Elfie's going to keep this place secure that we will not be broken into. Well, they didn't get rid of the Irish setter.

And here's this Irish setter going around loving everybody, and poor Elfie wasn't getting in on any of the love. And it wasn't very long after that that I went and visited the Williams. And, you know, the red Irish setter had conquered, and that police dog is just as gentle and mild today and no better a watchdog than the red Irish setter had been.

Incidentally, I didn't intend to give a lecture on dogs this afternoon, but I really think God put dogs down in the world to teach us lessons on love and worship. I really do. I was back visiting A.S. Loiseau years ago, and he met me down at the railroad station, and he drove me up to the yard of his spacious home there.

And when we got out, a dog came up and licked his hand and just lavished all kinds of affection on Mr. Loiseau. And over in the shadow under a lilac bush was a white dog, and it just stayed there completely unconcerned. And Mr. Loiseau said to me, that dog knows nothing about worship.

That's right. But the other one did. It was really beautiful.

I think God has given us dogs in the world to teach us. They're not like cats, you know. You know what a cat is like, don't you? A cat is kind of imperious, regal, struts around the house and says, Here I am, you lucky people, and I'll stay here as long as you feed me.

Is that right? A dog isn't like that. A dog really loves a fella. And you can beat him, you can be unkind to him, and all the rest.

He'll come and lick the hand that beat him. They're there as a lesson for us, preaching to us day by day. I hope we listen to what they have to say.

Sometimes it's hard to give and take love. I read recently of a celebrity, and this was in Time Magazine, it said he could do everything except express what he felt for the people he loved. It's kind of sad, isn't it? He could do everything.

It's a big shot. He could do everything but express what he felt for the people he loved. And in his book, *People in Prayer*, John White says this.

John White was of British background. I can emphasize with him in what he says. He says, For many years I was frightened of being loved.

I did not mind giving love or what I thought was love, but I grew ill at ease if anyone, man, woman, or child, showed too much affection for me. In our family, we had never learned how to handle love. We were not very expert at demonstrating it or receiving it.

I don't mean that we didn't love one another or that we didn't find ways of showing it, but we were very British. And he says, When I was 19 and leaving home to go into the army, my father did something quite unprecedented. He put his hands on my shoulder and kissed me.

I was stunned. I knew neither what to say nor what to do. For me, it was very embarrassing, while for my father it must have been very sad.

One day, White had a vision of Christ standing before him with nail-scarred hands outstretched toward him. At first, he felt helpless to receive Christ's love. Then he prayed, O Lord, I want to grasp your hands, but I can't.

In the quietness that followed, there came to him an assurance that the defensive wall he had built around himself would gradually be dismantled and that he would learn what it was to let Christ's love wrap around him and fill him. And I think that many of us have built defensive walls around us. The love is there, but we have inhibitions about giving or receiving, and we should let the Lord dismantle those walls so that we will be loving, not cold Christians.

One of the marks of the true child of God is love. He loves God, he loves his brethren, and he loves unconverted men and women for whom Christ died. May we go forth and manifest this love to a sin-sick world today, to see men won by warmth, not by words.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for speaking to our hearts today. Some of us can look back on our own lives and think of how busy we've been, and how we've busied ourselves like Martha, even in the work of the Lord, and yet really have not been as loving as we should have been. Lord, forgive us, we do pray.

We pray that you'll teach us innovative ways of manifesting love to one another and to those who are outside. Lord, this world is cold, this world is vindictive, and this world is bitter. And if men and women can just see the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we feel that they would break, that they would bow at his feet to receive him as Lord and Savior.

And so we pray that in the days to come you will write the lesson of love deeply upon our hearts. We ask it in the Savior's name, amen.

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