

Love and Victory

I John 5:1-5

A couple of weeks ago we saw that love is at work in us. There is something that happens when we allow God to live in us and help us to love.

We saw that the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to live as Jesus wants us to live. We totally lack the ability to live as Jesus has asked us to live. We lack the motivation to live properly as well. We always want to know "what's in it for us?" We keep looking for the reward. We attach conditions to every good thing that we do. The Holy Spirit however gives us the ability to live as we should without expecting something in return. It is the Holy Spirit who allows us to live in love, with pure and true motives.

We also saw that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the ability to learn from Jesus. The disciples heard and saw Jesus first hand. We may think we are at a disadvantage because we don't have Jesus here in physical form in front of us, but we do have the Holy Spirit who hears from the Father and then tells us what he has heard from God. We still have a personal contact.

We saw that the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to love as God loves. The Holy Spirit helps us to see how to love people. A lot of times, we lack the insight of how to reach out to people. We may even lack the motivation to do things. But the Holy Spirit reminds us that when we reach out to people in love, we are actually reaching out to God in love. To love God is to love people, and vice versa. Our continual prayers should be, "God, teach me how to be your love to someone else."

It is only when we demonstrate love by how we treat others, talk to them, reach out to them, and help them, that we can be sure that we belong to God and that we have the hope of eternity in heaven. Many people today fear the end of time and the after life. They fear the idea of facing God and having to answer for their deeds. But John is told us a couple of weeks ago that we don't have to have fear – we can have boldness and joy about the final day of Judgement. Our active love can eliminate the fear of the day of Judgement because God will never reject character that he himself has. God will never reject love.

Finally, John told us that we must love because we are loved. It is selfish for us to think that we can hold on to and keep to ourselves something that has been given to us. For us to receive love and then not give it away is pride. Think about the people that you don't want to love. Think about those people you can't stand. In reality when God looked at us in our fallen condition we were no different than those we can't stand. Yet, God still chooses to love us. Today, he wants to help us love each other. It is only by the ability of the Holy Spirit that we can love those we want to hate.

This morning I want to continue to look at **I John 5:1-5**. It reads:

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. ²We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. ³Loving God means keeping his commandments, and really, that isn't difficult. ⁴For every child of God defeats this evil world by trusting Christ to give the victory. ⁵And the ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

1. A Christian Must Believe in Jesus (verse one)

As John has been pointing out for us the importance of love, we need to understand what Jesus has done on our behalf. John tells us that we must believe that Jesus is the Christ. The term Christ here comes from the Greek word "Christos" which means the Messiah, or the anointed one. The idea of the anointed one is that of a specific individual sent on a mission.

We need to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and is the one who God has sent as the Messiah – the one sent to save the world from sin. In **Matthew 16:15** we read about Jesus asking Peter:

"Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

I know that Jesus would ask us the same question today, "who do you say I am?" Our response is not only about a verbal answer, but a physical and living answer as well. By the way we live, by how we speak to others, by how we treat others, our answer is living and exposed. "By my life, who do I say Jesus is to me?"

Is he truly the answer to my life? Is he really looking out for me? Is he concerned enough about me that he asks me to give up things in my life for my benefit? Do I trust him?

In **John 6:41** Jesus tells the people that he is the one from heaven, sent by God, and that he was going to bring salvation to the world by his death. We read later on in verse 60 that the disciples (which were not simply comprised of the twelve men) did not like what they heard, and began complaining. We pick up the story in **verse 61-69** when Jesus says:

"Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see me, the Son of Man, return to heaven again? It is the Spirit who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But some of you don't believe me." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) Then he said, "That is what I meant when I said that people can't come to me unless the Father brings them to me." At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to

the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?" Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

Would we answer God's question this morning like Simon Peter did, "Lord, to whom would we go?" Many people today don't. They find their needs met in some other way, materialism, drugs, sex and all kinds of other temporary solutions. **Romans 10:9-10** tells us:

For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

The word believe here in Romans 10 is the same Greek word used in I John 5:1. It can be defined as faith by implication and application, a trust or commitment, a reliance upon God. In other words it is faith that shows itself – it shows its commitment and its dependence upon God.

If we really believe that Jesus is who he said he is then it will show by how we respond to his words in Scripture. How many of us today are choosing to live in sin? How many of us are making decisions that contrary to the decisions God would have us make? Perhaps some Christians don't truly believe in God and are merely Christian by name and not by deed. If we believe in Jesus Christ then his words should change our lives.

John continues on in verse one and tells us something that we have been looking at for a couple of weeks. He tells us that if we love God we love his children, or fellow believers. It is interesting to note that up until this point John has been telling us to love fellow believers because of two reasons: To show evidence of God's love in us, and because of God's divine plan. Now he is coming to us and telling us we need to love each other because we are now Brothers and Sisters. This lead us to verse 2.

2. Love Is An Act of Obedience. (verse two)

Many of us may have proof of love for God, but do we possess the same type of proof when it comes to our brothers and sisters in the Lord? We have seen this before, that love for God is always connected with love for others. We can't hate something we can see and yet love something we can't see.

But there is something that happens when we obey God. We no longer act on what we want to do, but we respond based on what is right. Our love for God can keep our motives in check with our love for other people. We find ourselves withheld from loving with improper motives or ideas.

John used the words, “ We know” in verse two pointing to the fact that we have an inward conscience of understanding of what love is simply because we love God and obey what he has told us. We know what love is and what it should look like and therefore we must live it.

But do you realize that if we obey the commandments of God, our love and obedience can seem like we don’t love others. Sometimes our obedience will cause us to do things that people don’t want us to do. For example, a dishonest Christian may not want the truth to be told or exposed, yet obedience requires that we be honest. A fellow Christian may not want to hear about how their sin is effecting others, yet we are encouraged to help each other deal with our sin so that others won’t get tangled up in it.

Our obedience may not always be viewed by people as love, but the reality is that our obedience is the best thing for them.

John continues on in verse three and four, and in the NIV tells us:

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

3. A Weight Lifted With God’s Commands (verse 3-4)

Can we all agree this morning that living a Christian lifestyle in today’s society is not an easy thing to do. Sin is flaunted in our faces, calling us to “jump on board”. So then, how can John tell us that keeping God’s commands isn’t difficult or burdensome? We need to look at the word “difficult or burdensome” to understand what is being said here. The word comes from a Greek word that means “something that is heavy, in abundance, a load, a weight.”

Have you ever done a task that carried with it a load or weight? These type of tasks come with dread and a sense of self-pity. But when it comes to our obedience to God, he asks us to respond out of love. Love feels no load or weight. It motivates us to respond because of relationship and not because of need. When you think about it true Christians find God’s service and obedience easier than the service of sin. With the service of God is freedom, yet with the obedience to this world comes bondage.

You may ask, “then why is that I feel so heavy when I have to obey God?” I believe that complaints about keeping God’s commandments really show that one isn’t necessarily committed to keeping God’s commandments or believing in him. Maybe it feels heavy because you don’t want to give things up, or because you’re not sure that your effort will be worth it.

Jesus tells us in **John 8:32**:

“And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

Truth sets us free, not weigh us down. It is a matter of your perspective in your Christian walk. Jesus also said in **Matthew 11:29-30**:

Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.

I like how David saw God's commands. He saw God commands as a help and not a burden. In **Psalm 119:32** he says:

If you will help me, I will run to follow your commands.

David uses the word "run" in Hebrew which means "to run speedily and hastily, or to rush." In other words, "God, if you are going to help me, I can't wait to follow your commands." Is that how we view our obedience to God? Or would we say, "God if you are going to help me, I will get my butt out of bed, force myself to get ready, and drag myself to follow your commands."

Is following God a burden or a delight? We read David's words later on in **Psalm 119:77**:

Surround me with your tender mercies so I may live, for your law is my delight.

Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight. Psalm 119:111

David uses the word delight here which in Hebrew means "enjoyment or pleasure". Later in **Psalm 119:92** David tells us:

If your law hadn't sustained me with joy, I would have died in my misery.

There are those today that see God's commands as unreasonable, unrealistic, too limiting, or too hard. And because of this they throw away everything that has anything to do with God. They have viewed his commands as expectations that have been laid upon us. Their focus is more on the tasks than on loving God. They need to change their perspective. Maybe there are some of us in here that need this to take place in our own lives.

Jesus when talking about the religious leaders of his day said in **Matthew 23:4**:

They crush you with impossible religious demands and never lift a finger to help ease the burden.

Is that how you feel? That is not the kind of God we serve and I pray that we will not be this kind of church. May we be a church that finds joy in serving God, and finds joy in helping each other.

John continues in verse four and tells us that it is Jesus Christ who gives us victory over this evil world.

4. We Are Victorious With Christ.

There is a conflict between Christianity and this world. The world is so set in its ways and refuses to let God help them. God wants to help them. In **John 6:38** Jesus said:

For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do what I want. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day.

Jesus wants to give us victory. But for some the world is too strong. They don't realize that the ways of the world go against the very things that God stands for. In fact Jesus' brother, James tells us in **James 4:4**:

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world make you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God.

We are only victorious when we realize that we have been created to serve God, not the things of this world. We need to trust God. We need to have faith in his ability. A Bible Scholar writing about faith makes the following points:

- a. Faith causes us to cling to God and oppose the world
- b. Faith works in and by love and withdraws us from the love of the world and gives it to God.
- c. Faith purifies and makes us holy and severs the power of the world that can sway our souls.
- d. Faith finds strength in God and nothing else.
- e. Faith receives the promise of the Spirit of God, who is greater in us than those in the world.
- f. Faith looks forward to an invisible world, which challenges the soul to prepare to enter in.

We are only victorious because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Finally, John tells us in verse five this morning that those who win the battle are those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God. It is almost as if John is asking us "who else would be victorious other than the Christian?"

An early church father once wrote, "Survey the world and show me even one of whom it can be affirmed that he overcomes the world, who is not a Christian." Episcopi of Alford.

We need to live as if we are victorious. In **Romans 8:35** the Apostle Paul writes:

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened by death? (Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

No matter what we may face today in our everyday living, the challenges and circumstances, we are still victorious.

But God wants us to be victorious over this world, being able to eliminate any temptation or sin that could steal us away from God. In **Galatians 6:14** the Apostle Paul tells us:

As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interests in this world died long ago, and the world's interest in me is also long dead.

May we be able to come to the point when the world has no pull on us. Because of what Jesus has done may we find freedom and live in victory.

Conclusion

So this morning, we see John's challenge to us, to live as if we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that his words are to be our direction and correction. Who do you say Jesus is in your life today? Who do you say by how you live Jesus is in your life today?

Love is an act of obedience to God. And when we obey God sometimes our obedience can make it seem as if we don't love people. But the our obedience to God will always be for the benefit of others.

Also, to serve God is not suppose to be a chore, carrying a weight. It is suppose to set us free. Serving God brings freedom, serving this world bring bondage. Do we view our Christian walk as a chore or do we view it as a delight? Maybe we need God to come and change our perspective.

Finally this morning, we need to understand that we are victorious only because of our faith in Jesus Christ. We can't earn or achieve victory on our own, but only by the help of Jesus Christ. God wants to see that the world no longer has control over us, thus may we be able to say as Paul did, "my interest in this world died long ago."

Because of love we can find freedom. Because of love we can have faith. And Because of love we can find victory.