

Series: 1 John
Title: Hereby We Know We Love
Text: 1 John 5: 2
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1 John 5: 2: By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

Now we know that John is not speaking of the ten commandments. Paul said those commandments “*written and engrave in stones*” “*is the ministration of death*”; “*the ministration of condemnation*” (2 Cor 3: 7-9) Contrary to popular teaching, it is not the law of Mt Sinai that God writes on our hearts in the new birth—it is *the law of faith*. (Rom 3:27; Rom 8: 2; Heb 10: 14-23)

So what does John mean when he says “*we love God and keep his commandments*”? All the commandments of God are summed up in this one commandment, “*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*” (1 Jn 3:23). That is “*the holy commandment*” (2 Pet 2:21). It is the commandment God the Father gave to Christ our Prophet that Christ said is “*life everlasting*.” (Jn 12: 49-50) “*Jesus answered them and said, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*” (Jn 6: 29). On the mount of transfiguration, God gave his commandment from heaven when he said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*” (Mt 17:4-5).

In verse 1, John declared that we love God and our brethren by faith in his Son—“*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat...*” Notice, John says believing on Christ is loving God. John equates faith in Christ with love for God. He said, “*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ...loveth [God] that begat.*” And we love our brethren the same way, “*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ...loveth him also that is begotten of him.*” We love our brethren the same way we love God, that is, by believing that Jesus is the Christ.

Then in verse 3, John again tells us he is speaking of faith in Christ, “*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*” The only commandments of God that are not grievous are these, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*” (Mt 11:28-30). Christ is God. And those are the commandments of God that are not grievous. The apostle Peter said, concerning the law given at Mt Sinai, it was a “*yoke...which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*” (Acts 15: 22). Peter made that statement as a believer who once was under the law of Moses but was now under the law of Christ. So he was speaking by experience as one who knew which commandments of God are grievous and which are not. Peter said the commandments given at Sinai were so grievous that neither our fathers nor we were able to bear them. But he knew that through faith in Christ we establish the whole law of God because Christ established it on behalf of his people (Rom 3: 31-4: 3). Therefore, Peter knew (as every true believer knows) that the commandment to believe on Christ is not at all grievous, but easy and light, because in Christ we find rest from the impossible labor and heavy burden of the law of Sinai, which no sinner can keep.

Then in verses 4 and 5 John even declared more clear that he is speaking of God’s commandments to believe on his Son, “*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?*”

So in verse 2, John comforts every believer. Anyone who has experienced the many doctrines and commandments of men know that they give all sorts of laws in order to love the children of God. All those doctrines of men would leave a true believer wondering if he ever loved his brethren at all. They would leave a true believer doubting and in bondage and torment. But in our text, John settles our hearts by declaring, “*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God*”, which John says we do by believing that Jesus is the Christ. And we know we love the children of God when we “*keep his commandments*”, which all are summed up in his one commandment to believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Proposition: We love the children of God by believing on his Son, continuing in faith in spirit and truth, being fellow helpers to the truth of Christ.

ABIDE IN CHRIST

By obeying God’s commandment to believe and abide in Christ, and to abide in the doctrine of Christ, we love our brethren. Christ is God in human flesh. His commandment is that his people abide in him and in his words (his doctrine, his gospel).

John 15: 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5: I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6: If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. 7: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

We are sinners with no strength in ourselves. It is by Christ that we bear this fruit to begin with. When we are born of God, Christ effectually commands us, giving us faith to believe on him. We continue abiding in Christ the same way. And by our union with Christ—abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us—Christ makes his child bear fruit.

By Christ abiding in us and his words abiding in us, Christ promises, “*Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” We will look more in depth at this in another message. For now, notice, it is obvious in 1 John 5 that he has these words of Christ in mind because a few verses after our text John declares this very thing Christ declared concerning prayer. (1 Jn 5: 14-15)

So in our text, John declared that obeying these commandments of God to believe on Christ and abide in him is how we love God (1 Jn 5:2) That is what Christ said, “*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he is that loveth me...*” (Jn 14: 21). Also in our text, John declares this is how we know that we love our brethren. John declares the same thing in his second epistle.

2 John 1: The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I LOVE IN THE TRUTH; and not I only, but also all they that have KNOWN THE TRUTH; 2: FOR THE TRUTH’S SAKE, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. 3: Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, IN TRUTH AND LOVE. 4: I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children WALKING IN THE TRUTH, as we have received A COMMANDMENT FROM THE FATHER. 5: And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a NEW COMMANDMENT unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER. 6: And THIS IS LOVE, that we WALK AFTER HIS COMMANDMENTS. This is THE COMMANDMENT, That, as ye have HEARD from the beginning, ye should WALK IN IT.

“And this is love, that we walk after God’s commandments.” God commandments are that we walk in the truth, which is persevering in faith in Christ and in the gospel of Christ. This is how we love our brethren. We can show no greater love to our brethren than by believing on Christ and continuing in the doctrine of Christ under the preaching of the gospel as God commands us.

We do so by God’s grace by the constraint of Christ’s love for us. As John says, *“For the Truth’s sake.”* We do all for Christ sake. We receive one another, bear one another’s burdens, cover one another’s sins, and do all that we do together as brethren for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the gospel of Christ. The apostle Paul said,

1 Corinthians 5: 13: For whether we be beside ourselves, IT IS TO GOD: or whether we be sober, IT IS FOR YOUR CAUSE. 14: For THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Christ’s love for us constrains us. He laid down his life for all his people so that all his people are now dead—crucified with Christ. Our body of sin is destroyed having been slain by the justice of God when Christ was crucified. And Christ died for his people that they which are now born again should not live for ourselves but for him who died for us and rose again.

Therefore, Paul said, if we be beside ourselves, it is to God our Savior! It is for the Truth’s sake! If we be sober, it is for your cause, our brethren for whom Christ died. In all we do as the church of God, we do through faith in Christ, for the sake of Christ, for the promotion of the doctrine of Christ, constrained by the love of Christ.

Only when we the Spirit of God has given us a pure heart and brought us to obey Christ by believing on him do we love our brethren. The scripture says, *“Seeing ye have purified your souls IN OBEYING THE TRUTH through the Spirit UNTO UNFEIGNED LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently”* (1 Pet 1: 22). As John declares, it is by obeying God’s command to believe on Christ, to abide in Christ and in the doctrine of Christ that we love our brethren.

COMPROMISE IS NOT LOVE

2 John 7: For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8: Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9: Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

“Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.” It is not love to depart from the truth by compromise or to comfort those who are hiding in a refuge of lies.

I was reading an invitation to a conference that a church leader sent to me. It said, *“There will be nothing preached or done that is controversial or offensive.”* In other words, we will take the offense out of the cross and the gospel will not be preached.

The gospel is offensive to proud, natural man. If we preach the three R’s it will be offensive to sinners. To declare all sinners *ruined* by the fall with a will bound in sin so that no sinner can save himself is offensive to proud fallen man. To declare the necessity of *redemption* by Christ Jesus who redeemed his particular people alone offends the self-righteous. To declare the necessity of *regeneration* by the Holy Spirit by which sinners are called to life and faith in Christ is offensive to the will-worshipper.

Yet, if we would love our brethren, even strangers, we must declare that salvation is by the will and work of God who saves whom he will, apart from our works. It is offensive to sinners. But speaking the truth in love is the only way we can show a sinner true love. And it is the greatest way we can love!

But it is not love to make men with a false refuge think they have a good hope! Many think you show love by receiving and uniting with all denominations who preach false doctrine. They say do not offend them. Don't tell them that God first loved his people and only his people. Don't tell them that God first chose his people and only his people. Don't tell them Christ is the Wisdom, Righteousness Sanctification and Redemption of his people so that none can glory save in Christ alone.

Still, religious leaders who say things like that are only betraying a heart of unbelief. They do not believe on Christ themselves therefore they do not believe that God is able to save through the preaching of the gospel of Christ in truth. Until a man has experienced the hammer of God's word breaking his hard heart he cannot and will not believe that God saves through the preaching of the gospel of Christ in truth.

Jeremiah 23:29: Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? 30: Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. 31: Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. 32: Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

Does the Holy Spirit teach us to receive men who preach and promote lies?

2 John 10: If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: 11: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Brethren, that is not being mean. But if we receive men as brethren who believe lies, it is pure hatred! John said it is to partake of his evil deeds. To love is to remain faithful to Christ as we speak the doctrine of Christ in truth. The greatest love we can show to eternity bound sinners is to believe Christ so that we declare the doctrine of Christ that sinners are saved by Christ's works and not our own!

FELLOW HELPERS TO THE TRUTH

3 John 1: The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I LOVE IN THE TRUTH...3: For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified OF THE TRUTH THAT IS IN THEE, even as thou WALKEST IN TRUTH. 4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children WALK IN TRUTH. 5 Beloved, thou doest FAITHFULLY whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6: Which have borne witness of thy CHARITY before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7: Because that for HIS NAME'S SAKE they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8: We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be FELLOWHELPERS TO THE TRUTH. (3Jo 1:1-8)

We love our brethren by keeping God's commandments to walk in the truth of Christ, doing whatsoever we do faithfully to Christ, that we might be fellow helpers to the Truth.

By the Truth of Christ abiding in Gaius and his brethren, Gaius and his brethren walked in the Truth of Christ and did whatsoever they did faithfully to Christ. That is true God-given love (charity) which the church bore witness to.

This is John's point in our text. *By this we know that we love the brethren*—when we believe on Christ the Truth, when we abide in Christ the Truth, when we do all that we do faithfully to Christ, for Christ's name's sake, that we might be fellow helpers in promoting the truth of Christ.

Brethren, God has entrusted us with the gospel of Christ in this place. Think on that! What a privilege! What an honor! What a responsibility! If we would love one another and strangers (who may be Christ's lost sheep) then the way we do so is by believing on Christ ourselves, abiding in the doctrine of Christ under his gospel, and doing all that we do faithfully to Christ. We give of ourselves helping those who preach the gospel in truth that we might be fellow helpers of the Truth together—that we might promote the truth of Christ far and wide. But we must do so in truth! Paul said,

2 Corinthians 4:1: Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;
2: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation OF THE TRUTH commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

That is what I do each time I preach. I preach from God's word showing exactly what God says in his word. I say to all who hear, did I know show you in God's word that this is the truth? Here it is in black and white on the pages of God's holy word. We do not handle the word deceitfully. We do not walk in craftiness. We have renounced those things. By manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience. And do not miss out on this! We do so in the sight of God!

Paul preached the gospel to all men letting nothing become a distraction. He took nothing from the Corinthians because they were such money grubbers that he did not want that to be the only thing they could focus on! He declared the reason being this: *“And this I do FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE, that I might be partaker thereof WITH YOU”* (1 Cor 9: 23). The first cause was for the sake of Christ and his gospel. And that was how he loved them. He did it that he might be a partaker of the gospel with them—a partaker of Christ and all his blessings with them. Paul knew God would only bless the preaching that honored his Son and gave him the preeminence. It was great love to preach Christ alone, making himself a servant to his brethren. And this Paul did for the sake of Christ. Paul said, *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake”* (2 Cor 4:5).

Brethren, if we would be fellow helpers promoting the gospel of Christ then we must do all in faith to Christ and for his name's sake. Paul said, *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”* (Col 3:17).

One last illustration. I want you to see how the Lord Jesus commended Peter's faith and faithfulness when Peter declared his name in truth. And I want you to see the contrast. The Lord asked his disciples who men were saying he was. Then he asked his apostles.

Matthews 16: 15: He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16: And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17: And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter and [but] upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Christ commended Peter because of his testimony which exalted Christ in truth. He said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona! You are blessed of my Father. Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven revealed this to you.” Many misunderstand what Christ said next to Peter but let me try to paraphrase so I can show you. Peter's name means rock. Christ used a sort of play on words. “And I say also unto thee, “Thou art he whose name means rock. But Peter, upon this Rock—upon the clear, truthful

preaching which declares that I am the Christ—God’s anointed; the Son of the living God in human flesh sent to save my people from their sins—upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” But be sure to notice that Christ commended Peter because of his faith in Christ and because of his faithful testimony which bore witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the salvation of his people! Christ commended Peter because *that* is the Rock on which Christ will build his church. And as John tells us, faith in Christ and faithfulness to Christ in the declaration of his name is true love to brethren.

Now, notice the contrast.

Matthew 16: 21: From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he MUST go unto Jerusalem, and [MUST] suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and [MUST] be killed, and [MUST] be raised again the third day.

Christ declared to them that *“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so MUST the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”* Christ must be exalted on the cross! Christ must be high and lifted up on the cross as well as in the gospel we preach and believe. It is a must!

Matthew 16: 22: Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

No doubt, Peter thought this was love to *prevent Christ from being high and lifted up on the cross.* And what Peter did is no different from what men do who think it is love *not to exalt Christ and him crucified in the gospel they preach.* It is exactly what men do who think it is love to skip over passages of scripture that might offend erring brethren and offend the loved ones of the erring brethren. It is exactly what men do who think it is love to pamper professing believers who walk contrary to the word of God in a refuge of lies. But did the Lord call it love?

Matthew 16: 23: But [Christ] turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

When men refuse to exalt Christ on the cross, it is of the devil. It is an offense to Christ. It is savoring not the things that be of God but those that be of men! Now, listen to the Lord’s lesson. May he give us grace to obey this word in faith to him.

Matthew 16: 24: Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25: For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26: For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

We must deny ourselves—if we will believe on Christ and be faithful in proclaiming Christ then we must deny ourselves. We must deny our wisdom, deny our ways, deny our works and deny our worth. We must deny our vain thinking that we can believe on Christ and love our brethren while forsaking his people and his gospel to go our vain way. We must deny any vain notion that by taking the offense out of the cross we can make the gospel palatable to sinners. We must deny even the thought of compromise. Whatever it is that we would do that is contrary to faith in Christ and faithfulness to the truth of Christ, we must deny ourselves!

We must take up our cross—even if our dearest loved ones reject us and persecute us because we believe on Christ and proclaim his gospel in truth, we must be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ and his gospel. *“Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”*

We must follow Christ—we must follow him if we ourselves would be saved. We must follow him under his gospel with his people abiding in the doctrine of Christ. We must follow him if we would be the instruments God uses to save others. We must follow him in the message we hear, the message we support and the message we preach. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by him.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it—and that is what we do when we insist on having our way rather submitting to God's way. If we refuse to deny ourselves, if we refuse to take up our cross for his sake then we are attempting to save our life. We may gain the whole world by doing so! Multitudes may sit under our preaching by doing so! But Christ said we shall lose our lives. And *what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it—may God by his sovereign grace make us lose our life entirely for the sake of Christ—believe on him, abide in him, abide in his doctrine under his gospel with his people, be fellowhelpers of the truth—and do all for his sake, for his glory, for his honor! Oh, may God make us faithful to Christ alone!

In closing, brethren, remember, it is not love to God, to our brethren or to anyone else to compromise the gospel simply because I want to save my own life and have my will be done.

Hereby we know that we love the brethren, when God's irresistible grace makes us deny ourselves, take up Christ's cross, and believe on Christ apart from our works. We love poor, needy sinners when we are willing to suffer persecution that we might remain faithful to Christ and preach him in truth!

It is only upon the testimony of Christ the Solid Rock in truth that Christ builds his church. And it is only by abiding in Christ and his doctrine and being faithful to Christ that we love God and our brethren.

Amen!