

1 John - the Glory of Fellowship

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fellowship with God, which is based on the life of Christ and the practice of righteousness.

Duration: 1:00:04

Scripture: Psalm 40:8, John 20:31, 1 John 2:29 - 3:2, 1 John 3:7, Revelation 19:8

Topics: "Righteous Living", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude to God for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. The focus of the sermon is on the importance of practicing righteousness and doing the will of God. The speaker emphasizes that as children of God, we should strive to resemble our Heavenly Father by living a righteous life. The sermon also highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and transforming believers, as well as the significance of having a clear conscience before God.

Transcript

May we look to the Lord in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, our hearts do rejoice before Thee. Thou dost so love us as to give Thy only begotten Son to us.

He is in us as our life, as our everything. O our Father, we do thank Thee for this precious gift. We ask Thee that we may discover Him more and more, that we may know His power within us.

We may know His character, His nature within us. That by Thy Spirit daily we may be conformed, transformed and conformed to His image. That Thou may get all the praise and the glory.

We just commit this time into Thy hands. And I ask Thy Spirit to give us revelation and utterance. In Thy precious name, Amen.

We are studying together the first letter of John. We mentioned at the very outset that the gospel of John is on life. Eternal life.

The life that comes by believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The life of Christ. Christ is that life.

And the first letter of John is on fellowship. Life in action. This life that has been given to us, we who have received that life, we are called into the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ.

We are to fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with one another. Now we mentioned also that the fellowship we are called into is the fellowship of God's Son. He is the substance of our fellowship.

We fellowship with Christ. With the Christ that has been revealed and experienced by us. And we fellowship on the basis of Him.

That is, of His life. Now this fellowship has no other ground but the ground of life. For the ground of Christ.

We do not try to make any other thing as the ground of our fellowship. Therefore this fellowship is most inclusive. It includes all God's people who have His life.

And yet it is very exclusive because anything that is not of life, that is not of Christ, does not enter into that fellowship. So when it comes down to this matter of the reality of fellowship, the practice of fellowship, we find there are three conditions that must be met. The first we mentioned yesterday morning, for fellowship to be real and living, it must be in life.

And by life it doesn't mean understanding of the Scripture. It is life. But by life here you'll find it is God is life.

In Him was life. And the life was the life of man. We have the life of Christ in us.

And this life within us is our life. It shines upon our path. And by this life we walk.

If we walk in the life as God is in the life, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses us from all our sins. As we walk in the life that has been given to us, we begin to grow in life from children to young people and to the fathers. Now this morning we would like to continue on with the second condition of fellowship.

If we want to see that our fellowship is real, is living, is unhinged, is full, the fellowship must be in righteousness. So let us read a portion. 1 John chapter 2 verse 29.

1 John chapter 2 verse 29. If ye know that He is righteous, know that everyone who practices righteousness is begotten of Him. See what love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God.

For this reason the world knows us not because it knew Him not. Beloved, now we are children of God and what we shall be has not yet been manifested. We know that if it be manifested we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

And everyone that has this hope in Him purifies himself even as he is pure. Everyone that practices sin practices also lawlessness and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that He has been manifested that He might take away our sins and in Him sin is not.

Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has not seen Him or known Him. Children, let no one lead you astray.

He that practices righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous. He that practices sin is of the devil for from the beginning the devil sinned. To this end the Son of God has been manifested that He might undo the works of the devil.

Whoever has been begotten of God does not practice sin because His seed abides in Him and he cannot sin because he has been begotten of God. In this are manifested the children of God and the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God.

And he who does not love his brother for this is the message which he has heard from the beginning that we shall love one another. There is no fellowship if we are not of the same kind. As light has no fellowship with darkness so righteousness has no fellowship with sin.

We are told that God is righteous. This is His very nature. Just like light is God's nature.

God is open, transparent, full of light, nothing hidden, no shadow nor shade, glorious. That is the very nature of God. And to have fellowship with God there must be the same kind of condition within us.

There must be openness in us to be transparent as far as our light goes. There shouldn't be anything hidden. And if we are of the same kind of light, if we walk in the light as God is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another.

Not only with other father and the son but also with one another. Likewise, God is righteous. Therefore for us to have fellowship with God we must practice righteousness.

Now what is righteousness? Righteous simply means it is right, it is just, without prejudice, no partiality. It is the quality of God. God is righteous in all His ways.

God is righteous in all His doings. God is righteous in all His judgments. Righteousness is the very nature of God.

He is right. He cannot be but right. Whatever He thinks, whatever He feels, whatever He does, whatever He says, everything of God is just right.

Just what it ought to be. There is no compromise, there is no accommodation, He does not bend to anything, but is just what it should be. Now that is what our God is.

He is righteous. Therefore anyone who desires to have fellowship with God, he must do righteousness. Righteousness simply means the quality, the character of being right and just.

But dear brothers and sisters, we all know there is none righteous. Not even one. What sometimes we consider as our righteousness, according to the prophet Isaiah, we are told that our righteousness are as filthy rags.

They are not only rags full of holes that cannot cover our nakedness before God, but they are even filthy in the eyes of God. The best that we consider we have, the merits, the good deeds, the good actions, that we consider to be of some pride to us, they are as filthy rags in the sight of God. We have no righteousness.

We do not practice righteousness. We are not right at all. But thank God in Romans chapter 3 we are told that there is the righteousness of God that comes upon all who believe in the Lord Jesus.

The righteousness of God. What does it mean? It simply means that in forgiving our sins, in justifying us, God is still just. He is just, and He justifies us.

Now that is the righteousness of God. How can the just God justify us sinners? If God said He would forgive our sins, that is merciful. That is very gracious.

But that would compromise God being just. But thank God He has a way to justify us sinners, and yet He remains to be just. And that is called the righteousness of God.

Of course we know that He accomplishes this by giving His only begotten Son to us. He who has no sin is made sin for us. And that is the way that we find the righteousness of God comes upon all who believe in Jesus Christ.

And as we believe in the Lord Jesus, we are clothed with the robe of righteousness. And this robe of righteousness is none other but Christ Himself. So in other words, we who believe in the Lord Jesus, we who are justified by God, we are clothed with Christ.

And now Christ is made unto us righteousness. What does it mean? Christ is made unto us righteousness. It simply means that He gives us a right standing before God.

Formerly we cannot come to the presence of God without being slain. No one can enter into the presence of God without being killed. Because He is just, He is right, and we are full of sins and iniquities.

God has to judge us. But now as we are clothed with Christ, Christ is made righteousness unto us. We can boldly enter into the wholeness of all.

We can boldly come to the throne of grace. We can approach God with a holy boldness. Not because we have merit, not because we are worthy.

We are never worthy. But because we are clothed with Christ. As God looks at us, He sees Christ, our righteousness.

He does not see us. And that gives us a standing before God. And that standing is a permanent standing.

To put it in a way, we may change, but our righteousness never changes. Sometimes, you know, dear brothers and sisters, if you get up in the morning and you have a good night's sleep, and the sun is shining, and you feel very happy, when you go to God to pray, you feel you are full of confidence, knowing that you can stand before God. But if you wake up in the morning and you had a sleepless night, you had a headache, and it was gloomy outside, you do not feel as much confidence as the other day in approaching God.

Why? Because, somehow, we still have that misconception that if we approach God, there must be some merit in us. But dear brothers and sisters, it has nothing to do with it. We have no merit whatsoever.

Christ is our only merit, and He never changes. No matter how you feel. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Therefore, our standing before God, our approach to God never changes. But dear brothers and sisters, that is our position. When you come down into our daily experience of fellowship, then you find there is an if-there.

If we have fellowship with God who is righteous, we must practice righteousness. What do you mean by practice or do righteous? Here you find it is more than just once in a while you do something right. It

means that He that practices righteousness, and the word practice is a word of continuation.

If you continue to do right, if you live in righteousness, if you practice righteousness as a habitual thing, then you have fellowship with God. It is not just an isolated, some isolated single act of right. But it is a continuous life in righteousness.

And that is the meaning here. He who practices righteousness is begotten of God. How can we live a righteous life? So that we may have fellowship with God who is righteous.

You cannot live such a righteous life unless you are begotten of God. In other words, to practice righteousness is not a condition to be the children of God. On the contrary, to practice righteousness is the consequence of being children of God.

Thank God we have no righteousness in us. We are not able to live a righteous life. But thank God we are begotten of God.

Not only do we have a right standing before God being enclosed with Christ, but Christ is within us as our life. O dear brothers and sisters, you find we have not only a position, an ascending, being enclosed with Christ, our righteousness, but you find that Christ within us is righteousness unto us. This very life of Christ is a righteous life.

This very life of Christ has the habit of doing just the right thing. Not that we can do the right thing, but He always does the right thing. And because He is our life, therefore you'll find He who is begotten of God practices righteousness.

Righteousness, what is the standard of righteousness? In this world you'll find people take the law of the land, the custom of the country, the opinion, the public opinion of the people as the standard of righteousness. If you keep the law of the land, if you follow the custom of the country, if according to the public opinion they consider you as all right, then you are in the eyes of man as being righteous. But man can be righteous in the eyes of man and be very sinful in the eyes of God.

What is the standard of righteousness? The standard of righteousness is none other but God Himself. He is the standard of righteousness. And that's the reason why sin is lawlessness.

Sin is not only a transgression of a law. Sin is lawlessness. In other words, sin is an affront to the very character of God.

It is lawlessness. How can we be righteous? How can we practice righteousness? With God Himself as the standard. Again, we have to go back and see.

It is not us. It is Christ in us. He who practices righteousness is begotten of God.

And when the Apostle John comes to this point, suddenly he breaks out in worship. He says, see, what love the Father has given to us that we shall be called the children of God. That's the secret.

When you come to the point of practicing righteousness and you know that you cannot do it, it is just impossible with you. And then suddenly you realize that you are begotten of God. See, what men of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we are called the children of God.

We are not only called the children of God, but we are the children of God because we are begotten of Him. In other words, you'll find it is the love of the Father that begets us. Give us a new life.

Give us Christ as our life. And with this life in us, doing right is now available to every child of God. Is it not true that when you first come to the Lord Jesus, there is not only an outward change of position from being condemned to be justified, but there is also an inward change.

You'll find anyone who is begotten of God, there is a constitutional change within him. Formerly, you loved sin. Sin is your very life.

You get pleasure out of sinning. But after you believe in the Lord Jesus, there is an inward change within you. You'll find that you begin to abhor sin, and you begin to love righteousness.

A change has come upon you within you. Anyone who said he is safe, and yet he still loves sin, and he does not abhor sin, it is very questionable whether he is born again because it is more than an outward change of position. There is a constitutional change.

Even though through weakness you may still fall and sin, and yet, within you, you'll find there is an abhorrence toward sin. You do not want to sin anymore. You consider sin as a horrible thing to do.

And on the other hand, you'll find you do have a desire to be right. You do have a desire to do the will of God. What is righteousness? It is none other but the will of God.

No matter how weak you are, you may not have the strength to do the will of God. To will is in me, but to do is not in me, and yet you do will to do the will of God because you want to please the Father. To do right is no longer a matter of trying to appease your conscience.

To do right becomes a matter of trying to please your Father. That is the difference, the great difference. You know, formerly sometimes we tried to do a few good things in order to appease our conscience, to bribe our conscience, but no longer.

Today we do want to do right, we do want to do the will of God. There is a desire within us because we want to please the Heavenly Father. Think of our Lord Jesus.

In Psalm 40 we are told, our Lord said, And lo, I come to do thy will, O God! Thy will I come to do is my pleasure, and thy law is written in my heart. Now this is a family likeness. Our Father is righteous, and all who are begotten of the Father love righteousness.

If we do not practice righteousness, if we do not live our righteous life, by that we mean to do the will of God, where is the family resemblance? How can people see that we are like the Father? And thank God you find that the life is in us. We are able to do right, righteous in the sight of God. Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested.

We know that if it is manifested, we shall be like Him. For we shall see Him as He is. We are the children of God.

We are born of God. We have the life in us. Therefore you find there is willingness, there is desire to do right, to do the will of God to please our Father.

And as we are living a righteous life, we do not know what will happen in the future. But we do know that when it is manifested, we shall be like Him. Because we shall see Him.

This is our blessed hope. What is our hope? Our hope is one day we shall be like Him. As our Lord Jesus is.

So we shall be like Him. As He lives on this earth, and what a righteous life He lives. As our brother already mentioned, you find that His whole life on earth is I can do nothing of myself.

Whatever I do, I do it because I've seen the Father have done it. I cannot say anything of myself. Whatever I say is because I've heard the Father has said it.

And you'll find the whole life of our Lord Jesus is to do the Father's will. The Gospel says He goes around everywhere doing good. And by doing good it doesn't mean simply that He does some good deeds.

No, doing good simply means He does the will of the Father. Everything He does is doing the will of the Father. That is His delight.

That is the way that He lives. If it is the Father's will that He should go to Calvary, He should go to the cross, then Thy will be done. And this is a righteous life.

This is practicing righteousness. Now dear brothers and sisters, we have this hope before us. One day we shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.

And with this blessed hope before us, it should purify us. It should give us additional incentive to press on to live a righteous life like He does. Today we are only a little bit like Him.

There is a little bit of family resemblance that can be seen. But one day we will be like Him as He is. We will be conformed to His image.

Fully grown into sonship. Oh, brothers and sisters, it means that one day we shall be like Him, conformed to His image. His character shall characterize us.

His personality will be fully manifested through us. What a glorious hope it is! And all because life is already in us. And the process is already begun.

As the life of Christ begins to live in and through us, you find we begin to grow in likeness to Him. Until one day when we shall see Him, we shall be. And this hope ought to purify us.

Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness. And sin is lawlessness. You find the contrast here.

On the one hand is righteousness. On the other hand is sin. Righteousness, practiced righteousness, leads us to holiness.

To be like Him. Sin is lawlessness. It is rebelling against God.

But thank God He has provided salvation for us. And in the following verses you'll find several things. One is we know that He has been manifested, that He might take away our sins.

That is the first point. We who are full of sins, we live a sinful life, and yet the Son of God has been manifested, and the reason why He is manifested is to take away our sins. When He was born, He was

given the name Jesus, who takes away our sins.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He bore in His body our sins on the tree that we may be dead to sin and alive to righteousness. He who knew no sin was made for sin, made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus came into this world to destroy sin, to take away our sins. He bore our sins in His body on the tree. Our sins therefore are forgiven.

That is the first step. Then the second thing you'll find here is and in Him sin is not. There is no sin in Him.

And because He is sinless, therefore He can bear our sins on the cross. But it is more than that. In Him sin is not.

And this Him, this He, is now in us, our life. So dear brothers and sisters, we need to realize that today as children of God we have within us a sinless life. A life that knows no sin.

Not only has never sinned but does not even know what sin is because it has never rebelled against God. It always pleases the Father. And this life is now in us.

Number three. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Because we have Him in us.

He who is sinless, who has overcome, destroyed sin itself. Therefore whoever abides in Him, now here comes our responsibility. He is in us and yet, if we want to practice righteousness, if we want to overcome sin in our life, we must abide in Him.

And the word abide simply means make home in Him. We must make our home in Him. We must fellowship with Him.

We must commune with Him. We must stay with Him. We must remain with Him.

We must continue with Him as the branch abides in the vine. And if we abide in Him, what is the result? We do not sin. If we do not abide in Him, if we, so far as our experience goes, if we come out, as it were, positionally never, but in our experience, if we begin to walk in the flesh, if we begin to live by our own old life, that was already crucified.

If we do not live by the life of Christ, then there is still the possibility of sinning. But on the other hand, if we abide in Him, we do not sin. Why? Because we live by His life.

And His life cannot sin. His life never knows what is sin. Always do the right thing and please the Father.

So here you'll find number three, whoever abides in Him does not sin. And number four, whoever sins has not seen Him or known Him. If anyone should sin, it simply means you do not see Him or know Him at the time when you sin.

It doesn't mean that you have never known Him. But it comes down to your current experience. At the moment you sin, you have not seen Him.

You do not know Him. If you see Him, if you know Him, you cannot sin. Because He is your life and He lives in you.

You know, brothers and sisters, some people have problems with this passage. Because so far as our experience goes, thank God sometimes we are able to overcome sin. We do not sin.

But at other times we still sin. And yet the Apostle John said, He who practices sin is of the devil. He does not know God nor sin God.

And he who practices righteousness is of God. And this is the way we know who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. Now, brothers and sisters, we do find a problem here.

Are we children of God? Are we children of the devil? We know we are born again. We know we are children of God. But how come that we live in the gray area? Now, with Apostle John, it is either light or darkness.

It is either righteousness or sin. There is no middle ground. Why? Because if we look with God's eyes, truth is absolute.

With God in truth, there is no middle ground, no mixture. It is absolute. It is either this or that.

Either it is truth or lies. Either it is light or darkness. There is no twilight.

Either it is righteousness or sin. Lawlessness. If you look from God's viewpoint, the truth is absolute.

But of course, when you look at it from our experience, you find things beginning to be relative. But no matter what our experience is, the truth has not changed. The truth remains the same.

We have two problems here. Some people, when they read this portion, they think, well, he who is begotten of God cannot sin. Because the seed of him, of God, is in him.

He does not sin and he cannot sin. Thank God I am a child of God. I am begotten of God, therefore I cannot sin.

I am sinless perfect. You find among Christians there is a teaching of sinless perfection. When I was saved, I was saved among the holiness people.

Even though I was a Methodist. I was saved among the holiness people. And the holiness people have the teaching of the eradication of the root of sin.

You, after you are converted, you are saved, you shall go through a second experience, second blessing, and have the root of sin eradicated, and from then on you will never sin. You are sinless perfect. It is a very attractive teaching.

But right at the conference when I was saved, I saw the founder of that work lost her temper in public. Yet he continued not sin. It was just a weakness.

What did he say? Only Christ is sinless perfect. The life that is in you who is Christ is sinless perfect. It never sins, it cannot sin, it does not sin.

But so long as we still have the flesh, we still live in this world, there is yet a possibility of sinning. And when we sin, call it a sin. Do not try to cheat ourselves.

We are not sinless perfect. Survival is Christian perfection, but not sinless perfection. Now what is Christian perfection? Christian perfection is if we abide in Him, we do not sin.

Now that is Christian perfection. But here you will find there is another problem. Some people go to that extreme.

He who sins does not see God nor know Him. Therefore you can be unsaved again. You are saved, now you sin.

You have not seen God, not know God, therefore you are unsaved. And you have to be saved and unsaved, unsaved and get saved, and it is just going up and down, heaven and hell all the time. You do not know where you will end up.

Now let's go into the other extreme. Because Apostle John is not teaching about our initial salvation. So far as our initial salvation comes, it is already settled.

It is already finished. It is already settled in Christ. What he tries to tell us actually, instead of telling you that your salvation can be lost, he is trying to tell you that your salvation can be secured eternally.

If you abide in Him, you do not sin. But dear brothers and sisters, practicing righteousness is shown in two different areas. Negatively, the absence of sin.

And sin is lawlessness. Number two, the presence of love. How do we know that we practice righteousness? How do we know that we live a life as He, the righteous, lives? We know that we practice righteousness because we do not sin.

We are not lawless before God. We know that we practice righteousness because we love the brethren. We love the brethren.

He who is the righteous loves us so much as to give His life for us. As our brother quoted this morning, John chapter 13, He loves us all and He loves them to the end, to the uttermost. He who is the righteous, He gives His life.

And as He loves us, we ought to love. As He lays down His life for us, we ought to lay down our life for our brethren. And do not love in words, but love in deeds, in truth, in practice, love in practical matters.

And by loving, we know we are doing the right thing. We are doing the will of the Father. We are pleasing Him.

So dear brothers and sisters, here again you'll find how we need to live righteousness before God and before men. Then it comes to the matter of the heart. You'll find in chapter 3, verse 19, And hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall persuade our hearts before Him, that if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.

Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, we have boldness towards God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and practice the things which are pleasing in His sight. And this is the commandment, that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another, even as He has given us commandments. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we find that the Holy Spirit will lighten our intuition.

The Holy Spirit will shine upon our spirit, purchase our intuition power, and allow us to know Him intuitively. And now you'll find if we practice righteousness, or if we sing, here the Spirit of God will touch our heart, and by the heart here, it simply means conscience. Of course, the heart includes more than conscience, but here, particularly, you'll find it means our conscience.

How do we know that we practice righteousness? When? How do we know that we have sinned? The Holy Spirit within us will touch our conscience, and if our conscience condemns us, then we have sinned. If our conscience approves, then we have done right before God. So dear brothers and sisters, you know our Christian conscience is very, very important for our practical living.

Before we were saved, our conscience was not dependable. Even though it wasn't dependable, yet at the time that we are saved, actually the Holy Spirit touched our conscience, and convinced us, and bring us to repentance. But now our conscience is purified, is cleansed.

Dear brothers and sisters, how can we walk rightly before God? Be careful. Walk according to the dictate of your conscience. Why God is speaking through your conscience.

If anyone should lose his conscience, he is like a shipwreck. His faith will leak out. If we have a good conscience before God, it gives us boldness and confidence.

And know that our prayers will be answered. So you know how important it is for Christians to maintain a good conscience. A conscience void of offense.

A conscience cleansed by the precious blood. If our heart condemns us, God's heart is great of course. Our conscience is not perfect yet.

Our conscience needs to be developed. Just as light needs to be developed. Our conscience gradually becomes more and more sensitive as we follow our conscience, following God.

Things that we are not conscious of, we begin to be conscious. Things that we think is all right, now begin to see that it is not right. So you find that as the Spirit of God begins, as light begins to grow in us, our conscience ought to grow in sensitivity.

And if we walk with our heart uncondemned before God, we are accepted. That doesn't mean our heart is complete. It simply means according to the degree of life that we are in, we can stand before God with a clear conscience.

And then you'll find our fellowship will be uninterrupted. Oh, how it is important that we maintain a good conscience so that our fellowship with the Father and with the Son is uninterrupted. How we need to maintain a good conscience that our fellowship with our brothers and sisters will not be under any cloud.

Whenever our conscience is under cloud, you avoid your brothers and sisters, and you avoid God. You know it. So dear brothers and sisters, how we need to live before God and live righteously.

But thank God it is not by ourselves. It is the life of Christ within us. The Holy Spirit is just.

Bring out the life of Christ within us. And patiently incorporate Christ into us. So that finally you'll find we are clothed not only with a robe of rock gold, which is Christ our righteousness, but over above it, a garment of embroidery.

The Holy Spirit will stitch needle by needle, Christ into our life. As He does the work, of course with every needle there may be a little pain there. But after the work is done you'll find a beautiful garment of embroidery.

And in Revelation chapter 19, the bride has made herself ready and she is given the garment of pure living, bright and shining, which is the righteousnesses of the faith. And this is what John is talking about. He is talking about practical righteousness.

He is talking about how we need to live righteously before God in this world. And thus our fellowship will not be hindered. I think we will just stop here.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank Thee that Thou who art righteous Thou hast justified us. Thou hast given Thy Son to us as our righteousness, as our life. How we praise and thank Thee that Thy Holy Spirit is working Christ continuously in us, that we may be transformed and be conformed to His image, that we may practice righteousness, we may not sin, and we may do the will of Thee.

Oh, how we praise and thank Thee that all these things are open to us, are available to us. We just cast ourselves upon Thee and say, Lord, perfect Thy work enough that Thy name may be glorified in Thy precious name. Amen.

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