

Reading: 1 John 4:7-5:1

Theme: Received the Holy Spirit.

In the section we read, we are again in the social test of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have seen that we are to show evidence that we are born of God and know Him. If that love is absent then there can be no grounds of assurance of salvation because we do not know God, for God is love and has shown us that love - active, undeserved and positive love. We are shown in v11 that we are to imitate and copy God. We noted last time *The Invisible God* in v12 and saw that He is made the visible, incarnate God in our lives as we love one another. We are to be living, interactive audio-visual displays of God and His love - as Jesus said in John 13:35. We also saw John made an incredible statement about the Indwelling God - God lives in us! We touched on this in a bit more detail last time. How can such love be present in us?

Yet a greater question occurs “*How can God live, dwell, abide in us?*” As we go into v13 John opens up on this and shows us it is by the person and work of the Holy Spirit - as hinted at by Paul in Romans 5:5 “*God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.*”

John was writing this letter to assure these struggling believers of the things they had believed and of the certainty of those things. In the early days of radio in the UK, George Bernard Shaw was giving a talk about the peculiarities of the English language and said there are only 2 words that begin with the sound “sh” but are not spelt ‘sh’. One listener wrote in and said there was only one – sugar. GBS sent a postcard in reply saying “*Are you sure?*” Are we sure of the things we believe? John has given evidences, tests to cause us to be sure for ourselves and here he introduces a section that begins “*We know...*” It is amazing that we can be sure of these invisible spiritual realities and John presents 5 main pieces of evidence in v13-21.

Evidence 1: Received the Holy Spirit (v13)

Evidence 2: Apostolic Testimony (v14)

Evidence 3: Personal Acknowledgement of Jesus as God's Son (v15)

Evidence 4: Confidence in God's Love (v16-19)

Evidence 5: Loving Our Brothers and Sisters (v20-21)

That has been a quick overview of where we have been and also where we are going. All I want us to consider this evening is **Evidence 1 - Received the Holy Spirit** and do so using 4 headings:

1. Incredible Knowledge.

The huge, marvellous statement by John in v12 of God living in us, is going to be further unpacked and developed in this verse. We have already touched upon it and know something of what John says. It will do us good to pause a moment to note that John says this to ordinary, hurting, confused and struggling believers "*We know...*" John does not say "*I as an apostle, as an eyewitness of Jesus know*" but "*We know...*" Literally he says "*We all know and keep on knowing personally*" (present continuous tense). It is not to be left in the realm of things we have been told or taught but it is also to be known through personal experience and is to be kept on being known.

We can, and should know of a certainty, that we are in a relationship with God and that we have the life, the eternal life He promises. 1 John 5:13 gives us the reason why John wrote to these ones "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*" Yes, that personal knowledge is to grow, develop and mature but it is to be present and we should pray and desire to know such assurance.

Sadly, Christians who are uncertain, fearful or doubting of who they are and of their relationship with God struggle in their enjoyment of their relationship and salvation. These things in the Bible, especially

the NT, are written to grant us the high honour of assurance - “*Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me.*” Do we know anything of this incredible knowledge? It is more than a feeling or a notion. It can be detected by the evidence. Look with me again as we note we can have this Incredible Knowledge of the:

2. Indwelling God.

John had mentioned this amazing truth in v12. We saw there the word can mean “ *dwell in, abide in, live in*”. There it was focused on God dwelling in us; here in this verse and another twice in v15 & 16 he speaks of a reciprocal, a mutual indwelling - God dwells in us and we dwell in God. On each of the 3 occasions when this mutual indwelling is mentioned in these verses, an extra comment is added - v13 = He has given us His Holy Spirit; v15 = if anyone acknowledges Jesus is the Son of God; v16 = whoever lives in love. We are to note the order - given the Holy Spirit and it is He that causes us to see, recognise and own Jesus is the Son of God and the Holy Spirit is the One who enables us to love, live in love. Without Him we are blind to who Christ is, are selfish and unable to love God or His people. Here we see the importance of the work and Person of the Holy Spirit through whom God indwells, lives, dwells, abides in His people and we dwell, live, abide in God.

The Lord Jesus spoke of the 3rd person of the Trinity, of His abiding, indwelling, living in believers, especially in chapters 13-16 of John’s Gospel. We are in the area of what theologians call “*the mystical union*” and how it is a sinner can share in the many benefits and blessings of Christ’s redemptive, salvation work. This is impossible unless we are in a union with Him. This union is real, but is brought about through the person, work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all individual believers.

Although our attention in this verse is on the operation of the Holy Spirit and His making such a known reality in our lives, there is,

behind it, great unseen eternal realities - the giving by the Father to the Son a people; the union of that people with the Son in the counsel of redemption; the plan of salvation entered into; then its realisation, its out working in history as the Lord Jesus came to earth, did all necessary for our salvation which accomplishes the means for the actual union. It is this accomplished work of Christ the Holy Spirit applies to our lives and unites us to God through Christ.

It is termed the mystical union because we cannot explain it in terms of any human relationship because it exceeds all such terms and yet it has a real transforming power, influence upon us and glorious consequences in and for us. As the Holy Spirit dwells in us and we in Him, this unites us to our Saviour in an organic union - we are one body and He is the head; it is a living union as we are given the life of Christ and this life becomes the dominating principle in our lives, it causes us to live in Him and we are conscious of that to a lesser or greater degree as we go on in our lives.

I've tried briefly to give us some of the key points of our dwelling in God and He in us - all this is mediated, brought about because God has given us His Holy Spirit. When we become a believer, we have Him in Person - His influence and presence and this has to grow and develop in our lives, but He indwells us and we are given all of Him when we believe. What a privilege to have the Indwelling God and it is a mutual indwelling, now see:

3. Incomparable Life.

Being a Christian of necessity involves this mystical union and it then blows out of the water any low or insignificant views of what a Christian is. Society, even sadly churches, Christians and even preachers can dumb down, water down and minimise what a Christian is. It is not merely turning over a new leaf in our life; it is not just making a decision for Jesus, nor is it giving up certain things - whether gross sins or not, nor is it going to church, or being moral,

or having high and good standards or ideals. It is not even undergoing religious rites and rituals or even knowing and agreeing with the Bible. All these things evaporate and disintegrate when we bring in **v13** - BOOM! They are all blown out of sight, for true Christianity is about being in a personal union and relationship with God by the working of the Holy Spirit applying all the salvation work Christ has accomplished to our lives.

We about you in the light of these things? Do you really have any idea at all of what I'm talking about, of what the Bible clearly presents as something real, something glorious - an incompatible life in which we are made partakers, sharers of the divine nature - as Peter says in 2 Peter 1:4 *"he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature..."*

We are never to lose sight of this as believers - for we have an incomparable life - live in and with Christ and united to Him, living in Him and He in us by the work and person of the Holy Spirit. We are the most honoured of God's creatures if we are a Christian and we are never to lose sight of it, even in the dark and difficult times. How then can we know that is our state? See briefly:

4. Incontestable Proofs.

This incredible knowledge, this indwelling by God in us, our indwelling in Him - the incomparable life will evidence itself, give proofs, will show in our life and we can note these, be encouraged and assured by such proofs and evidences. Our God doesn't want us to go uncertain and unsure to heaven, but there are life proofs we can look for and be certain we have, through the work of the person of His Holy Spirit, the glorious grace gift from the Father and the Son. So, let's look at some of these proofs of grace - note some or all may be in place, but one is sufficient to say *"Be certain and be encouraged"*.

A. Conscious of spiritual matters: do we find in our life a desire to know about God and the things of God? Perhaps at one-time God was just irrelevant, was someone, something there in the recesses of our mind and life but now we find He is important and we need to know, to question and to find answers about Him. Now we want to learn of heaven and hell, of eternal life, of knowing God and pleasing Him. If this concern is present in our lives, then be assured it is of God the Holy Spirit at work in us, else we would have no interest - for the carnal mind has no interest in God.

B. Concern over sin: before this consciousness of and over spiritual matters we may have felt we were OK, not perfect but fine and certainly better than... Now we are coming to see not only that we do sin but there seems to be a principal in us that shows we are wrong with God and deserve nothing from Him. Romans 7:14ff seems to be our experience *“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.”* We seem to have a split personality and yet we agree God’s law is right - good and right, but we find we can’t keep it! To have concern over this and hate such sin and a sinful nature is a proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

C. Centred on the Lord Jesus: we have come to recognise in Jesus that He is more than a religious figure but He is the only one who can do us good and we have asked Him, in light of our sense of sin and hopelessness, to be our Saviour, to receive us, to make us His child. Yes, we may not have used or quoted fancy words, we may not be able to verbalise what we’ve done - except that we’ve recognised we needed Him and believed in Him and would agree with v14-15 as it expresses it better than we could – we have gone to Him as our only hope. All who truly believe on the Lord Jesus as

their Saviour have the gift of and the presence of and the work of the Holy Spirit in them. In a book I am reading, I came across a quote by Spurgeon “*On Christ, and what he has done, my soul hangs for time and eternity. And if your soul also hangs there, it will be saved as surely as mine shall be. And if you are lost trusting in Christ, I will be lost with you and will go to hell with you. I must do so, for I have nothing else to rely upon but the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived, died, was buried, rose again, went to heaven, and still lives and pleads for sinners at the right hand of God.*”

D. Conflict within: this is a strange proof! We have believed in the Lord Jesus and then find we are involved in a tug-of-war - with us as the rope! We find we want to do things to please God, but then we find we are being drawn to things we feel, know are wrong and it causes us to fear that we are not a Christian and may lead us to panic or even despair. We are to take heart and realise it is a battle we are all in as Christians - a conflict between our old un-Christian nature and the Spirit of God in us. It will go on, to a greater or lesser intensity, all our earthly life and it is a proof of life, the eternal life that is within us by the working of the Holy Spirit.

E. Changed by God: now we will find we are changing and not so much resolving to do so and changing ourselves, but God shows us areas of our lives, attitudes, language, thoughts and actions that are wrong and He enables us to change. Maybe we had a sharp tongue, or a quick temper, were given to critical thoughts, wrong attitudes and practices and even these, even if these were ever so dear to us, God is changing us by His indwelling Holy Spirit working within us.

F. Creation of the fruit of the Spirit: as God is at work within us by His Spirit so the Holy Spirit will create and reveal Himself by the fruit of the Spirit, as such will quietly develop and mature in our lives. Paul points us to this in Galatians 5:22-23 “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

gentleness and self-control.” Yes, there is a variation in that fruit, its recognition and manifestation, but it will be there to a greater or lesser extent in our lives.

G. Cry of adoption: we read of this in Romans 8:15 *“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.”*” Now we find God is no longer “out there” but He is real, personal, precious and we come with joy to Him as a child to their father for the Holy Spirit continues to make Him known and precious in our lives as we read His word and spend time with Him in prayer.

H. Conferral by the Spirit: as part of His ministry and work within us He gives, confers to us gifts and equipping to serve God and His people. This is a big area to look at, but we are to look for the conferred, given and bestowed equipping and gifts the Spirit gives us as we go on in the Christian life, whether large or small, spectacular or not, but they will be present to use for God and His people.

I realise there’s a lot there to chew over, to pray over, but my desire and prayer is that we would all grow in assurance of who we are in Christ and we would go on with a growing joy to live for and to serve our great God and Saviour.