

**Reading:** 1 John 5:13-21

**Theme:** The Real Life.

We have seen that in v6-21 we have 5 certainties:

1. *Jesus is God (v6-10)*
2. *Believers have eternal life (v11-13)*
3. *God answers prayer (v14-15)*
4. *Christians do not habitually practise sin (v16-19)*

Last time we looked at v19 and noted the position of the world - in the devil's power and control. This was in stark contrast to the position of the Christian and we saw the wonderful grace work of God that brought such about. This is to cause us to adore and worship this God of grace, to have a desire and concern to let others know their position outside of Christ and what can be the theirs trusting Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. John moves on and we see:

### **5. The Christian life is the real, the true life (v20)**

Once again John makes another confident affirmation in this verse and declares that the Christian life is the true, or the real life as opposed to the false, counterfeit life. The word John uses here is not the word we would use in asking "*Is that true?*" But "*Is that real?*" Is it genuine, is it real? Advertisers like Coca-Cola have used this idea years ago "*It's the real thing*". Here John says that the Christian life is the real, genuine and true life.

This is the most fundamental statement of the three "*we know that...*" statements in v18-20, for it is the ground and the substance of the other two. John works up to this pinnacle, crescendo. Our victorious faith is based on what God has done in history in sending His Son and we are to recognise, know the change of position, status and destination we have is because of God's work in us and this is how we have been delivered from the power and

dominion of the evil one. Here in v20 John says wonderful things in summing up his arguments, his letter. I want us to note 2 main things from this verse:

### **1. How Do We Know?**

The ones John wrote to were probably in Ephesus. As such they had been mostly brought up in a city that worshipped Diana goddess of the Ephesians; they were in a place where sorcery was practised (*read Acts 19 about Paul's visit to Ephesus and how the gospel come and you will see there was much idol worship there as well.*)

For such ones to be saved from such a background was a miracle of God's grace – but is such for everyone who is saved! Yet the pressures were still on them - come, compromise, join in. It would have affected social life, customs and behaviour - even what was acceptable and normal. When they were converted all was radically different and new. Sadly, false teachers arose and mixed and matched religious ideas and had a “*pick and mix religion*” - adding to, claiming to supersede and have a better religion than Christianity. As believers, they could begin to question, to waver and so John wrote and declares that Christianity is the real and the true life. John has been writing of “*we know and continue to keep on knowing...*” How do we know? How can we be so sure? Isn't it arrogant? In the light of all those religions in Ephesus and those around us today, how can we be sure that the Christian life is the real, the true and the genuine life?

We are now brought to consider what John has already said - the position of the world and of the Christian. How is it we have been brought from death to life, from being hell-bound to heaven-bound; from blind to seeing; from under the power of the evil one to be of God; from ignorance to knowing and understanding; to

turn from dead idols to the living God? It is not of our own will, determination, mental capacity or deserving. We are bound and captive in all those areas to sin and the devil.

We are to own, recognise, know that God has worked - we have been given, as a free gift, this knowledge and understanding as part of the salvation package. The things of salvation are brought to us by the working of the Holy Spirit, we can, I can, in reaction to the excesses of some in churches concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, fail to give Him the due honour and glory of His person and working. Without Him and His so gentle and yet mighty working and influence in our lives, the things of God would be cold, academic, dry and sterile.

Without the Holy Spirit and His working, even the best of preaching would be even more dull and powerless, our Christian lives would be mundane and barren. Yet with His working, the truth of God's word becomes energised in our reception and delivery of it; the word of God, as we read and hear it preached, becomes invigorating, alive, enabling and personal. Preaching is foolishness to those who are perishing, so with the preacher aside, if you feel the gospel message is a waste of time, space and energy then you must ask what does it say of your spiritual situation! Yes, preachers need the energising work of the Holy Spirit as they bring God's word. In our lives as Christians there are times when it seems as if God's word is alive and speaks personally to us. Is not because we are cleverer that day, or more awake, but it is the working of the Holy Spirit. The same is true in prayer, in remembering the word of God to help us in a situation of life or as we are witnessing.

He, the Holy Spirit, is God's gift from heaven. He was sent by the Father and the Son on the Jesus' return to heaven. Recognise the

Holy Spirit was in the world and working before that and there are many OT references to Him, but He came in His wonderful fullness on the day of Pentecost and He applied the completed work of the risen, ascended and glorified Saviour. Then He was not confined to Jews only, but came to whosoever believed on the Lord Jesus from any nation. It is He that takes, applies and glorifies the work and person of the Lord Jesus, who in turn glorifies the Father.

Only by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit are we born again, do we come to have this understanding and knowledge. Only when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes do we see our state and position in the world and of the world. Yes, we have to listen, seek, think, call on God, but we cannot make ourselves alive, but as we use the means and faculties God has provided, then the Holy Spirit works in our lives. We need to be born of God's Spirit (*John 3 and Nicodemus*), we need our hearts opened as with Lydia - this is not necessarily a dramatic event, but can be a quiet and gentle work. When that occurs, we have the ongoing work, presence and help of the Holy Spirit in our lives - making us more and more Christ-like, desiring more of God and to glorify Him. By the work of the Holy Spirit we certainly know these things and so we go on and see:

## **2. What Do We Have?**

We have understanding and knowledge of both the Son of God and the Father. We are to remember that one-time Jesus, God were as nobodies to us. We may have had a notion that they might have been there, but we were ignorant of them and didn't know them personally. Yet in one way or another the Holy Spirit worked in us and we began to recognise, to realise who Jesus is; to recognise and realise who God is. We may not have liked what we were learning as it might have exposed us and our helplessness, but we

began to see that in Christ and Christ alone was our only hope of being right, of being at peace with God and that we could know Him who is true, real and genuine.

It was not worked up, we were not brainwashed or pressurised, but we came to see, know and understand who God is, where we stood before Him and how in Christ we could know Him and have His salvation. We can say such things so easily, quickly, even thoughtlessly, but this understanding and knowledge screams out, underlines that it is a work of God and this all through His grace by His Spirit in our lives. *“We know and continue to know”* that God has broken into history in the person of His Son in human flesh, He accomplished all needed for the salvation of sinners and by God’s working in us, we knew and continue to know that and understand something of the enormity of all He has done. It is not just a head knowledge to be able to answer questions about Jesus, His dying to save sinners, even knowing and being able to discuss and debate doctrines. It is a meeting and knowing and submitting to the One who is true, truth, real and genuine. Is not a fairy-tale told to amuse, but it is the truth of One who is real, genuine, true and we know Him and He affects our lives.

This knowledge becomes fellowship – cast our minds back to when we looked at chapter 1 and saw that the facts of Jesus were proclaimed so that we could have fellowship with not only the 1<sup>st</sup> eyewitnesses, but with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1:3). Jesus came to bring us into this personal relationship and fellowship with God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This fellowship is not just some external relationship, but we are *“in Him who is true”*. We are in God, in Christ and they are in us. We are in union - a living and loving union and relationship. The Lord Jesus describes Himself as the true vine - using the same

word as we have here in v20 - the true, real, genuine vine. We are to abide, be in union with Him as branches, so to bear fruit. We are in union with the Father through our being in union with Christ.

There is this union and we are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and as such we have eternal life - He is true, real, genuine and is eternal life. If we are in union with Him we have the real, true, genuine life and are possessed by and are possessors of eternal life. Eternal life is just not for the future, but is a reality now in space and time with the life of God in our souls.

The Christian life is real and genuine. It is not some copy of life. You can buy copies of the Mona Lisa, but it will look a bit naff hanging up in your living room, but if it makes you happy, then fine! Yet to have the real, the true Mona Lisa hanging there - well that is a different story! The Christian life is not a copy of life, but it is the true, real, glorious and genuine article, the true life, from the true, real, glorious and genuine God.

As such, because of such, we are to be real people - alive to God, not duped or deceived by the evil one's propaganda and be captivated by his trinkets, but we see things as they are; we are to live aware of a real enemy and yet knowing we are kept safe for he cannot ultimately harm us. As such we are to live life to the full! Yes, all things are permissible for us, but not all things are beneficial and so we are to live our lives to please our true God and Saviour and not to pander to our sin-biased desires and wants, but bring everything under the control and the authority of our Saviour.

We are not to be self-indulgent - which is easier said than done. It is so easy for us to think the Christian life is or should be a lying

back and luxuriating in a celestial bubble bath type of life. Christian assurance in the Christian life is to be worked out in the nitty-gritty of life as we go through difficult and testing times and also in the sunshine, joyous exciting times that God sends our way.

John doesn't end his letter by saying that we live happily ever after, but seems to end this letter on a strange note in v21! Yet it was important then, it is also important now and God willing we note look at this next time. Until then I pray that we would know the Son of God has come and given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true, that we are in Him who is true - even His Son Jesus Christ who is the true God and eternal life.