

WALKING IN THE LIGHT- First John and the Path to Living Deeply in Christ - Part nineteen
Sunday, May 30th, 2021 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2105
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THE HOLY SPIRIT - THE LIFE INSIDE (PART 2)

1 John 4:13 - "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

Last Sunday we were considering John's basic theology of what makes a Christian a Christian. Both of his key points come from our opening text today. **First, a Christian is one who has been born of the Holy Spirit.** The convert isn't a self-creation. There is more involved than self-will or self-improvement. And **second, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit - the Spirit's indwelling - is a knowable experience** - "By this we know that we abide in him and he is us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

But John doesn't just leave this as a bare concept. There are signs of the Spirit's work and presence, and John means for us to know them. That's where we pick up our study today. This will be our point number three.

3) HOW CAN I KNOW WHEN THE SPIRIT IS AT WORK IN MY LIFE?

Let me outline some of the **initial signs** of the grace of God activating the life of the **Spirit** in the human heart. Here are some **evidences** of the Spirit's work:

A) ARE YOU FINDING A GROWING INTEREST IN THE THINGS OF YOUR SOUL AND THE MATTERS OF ETERNITY?

Paul talks about the people of this world and says they have their "**minds set on earthly things**" (**Philippians 3:19**). Of course, **all** of us must **do** earthly things. We live here and work here and play here. It requires our attention.

The key word in Paul's sentence is that word "**set**" - "**their minds are set on earthly things....**" They can't get **above** those things. They're **glued** to the "**desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride in possessions**" (1 John 2:16).

The meaning and joy of life is **set** on these things. They have no time for spiritual

concerns. They're always tired when it comes to church. They're easily bored. Services are always too long. Spiritual concerns make them sleepy. They are always busy with other things when God wants to deal with their soul. They are dominated by the flesh and the material.

Test your heart. Is your biggest concern what is happening to the dollar? Are you more interested in the latest developments from MicroSoft or Apple than the Incarnation? Can you find endless fascination in video games but can't memorize a Psalm? Do you think more about your investments than the sermon on the mount?

Or do you find another set of thoughts bubbling up to the surface of your mind? Do you think about how short life is, heaven and hell, and the need to make every minute count more for Christ? Do you turn to the Bible with great anticipation to see God's heart? Do you hunger to know more of Him and His ways?

On to test number two:

B) DO YOU FIND A GROWING SENSE OF SIN IN YOUR OWN HEART?

I need to explain. I don't just mean you do some things you wish you didn't. That's a universal human feeling. I'm talking about a sense of somehow grieving a holy God - displeasing His loving heart. Do you find yourself living each day with an awareness that you are more than the animals who live by blind instinct? Do you sense an upward pulling into righteousness - that you are not just *living* your life, but *building* it - not just for *your* satisfaction, but for **God's** glory? Do you find yourself less and less a fit with the values of the surrounding culture?

C) THIRD, DO YOU HAVE A GROWING SENSE OF THE BATTLE OF NATURES IN YOUR OWN HEART?

You should. As the new nature from God is fed and exercised it will *push* its way into previously uncharted regions of your soul. Living things always make themselves manifest. So it is with the life of God in the human heart.

Galatians 5:17 - “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

The unconverted man knows nothing of this battle. He may sense a failure to live up to his upbringing or some standard he has set for himself. But he ***ultimately feels he has failed only himself or his peers***. His concerns go no higher than that.

Paul says the Christian senses another power at work inside his own being. It's an ***alien*** power - like a baby kicking at the walls of its mother's womb, Paul says ***God works*** on the inside of our lives:

Philippians 2:12-13 - “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

That's it exactly - God working in you! You become aware of another Presence. He works ***against*** the downward pull of sin and self. You ***sense*** the pull and the conflict. You become aware of more than merely ***yourself*** involved. It's not even just an awareness of ***you*** doing the work. It's an awareness that you are being ***dealt with*** by ***Another***.

"Well, all this talk about another power involved in my life sounds kind of spooky and far out. I don't think I can relate to that."

Yes you can. In fact, the Bible tells us ***everyone*** experiences this, far more than he or she realizes. You see, the Christian is not the only one influenced by another power beyond his own.

Remember Paul's words in **Ephesians 2:1-2 - “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience....”**

Note Paul's repeated use of that verb ***"following."*** Everyone ***follows*** someone. No one ***leads***. Paul seems to feel the need to remind the church there are ***no spiritual free-lancers***. I suppose he knows how quickly we forget this. All people, before their conversion, were under the dominion of the ***"....prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...."***

Perhaps you're here and not yet a Christian. Perhaps you're afraid of giving your life over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you wonder whether to submit to His call and open your life up to His gracious Holy Spirit. Of course, that is up to you. But don't make the mistake of thinking that you are free and independent if you leave Jesus alone. Presently, without Jesus Christ, you are mastered, ruled, held in bondage by the power of the Devil himself. You are still a ***follower***.

"Well, I don't sense that, Pastor Don."

Of course you don't. The Bible says you're just like a blind man who has never seen one shred of light since birth and so has no concept he's in the dark. But Paul says when Jesus comes - and for the very first time shafts of light and sight enter your soul - then you know the conflict - the glorious battle - the new life crowding and pushing out the old. You feel the power of freedom and grace crowding out the dark. That's a sure sign of the presence of the Spirit of grace!

D) FOURTH, ARE YOU DRAWN TO JESUS IN CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, LOVE AND WORSHIP?

We've already looked at this in this letter from John:

1 John 3:23, 4:2-3 - "And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.....[4:2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."

Next week we'll study 1 John 4:15 - "**Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.**"

People don't naturally love Jesus as **Savior** and **Lord**. They love His **teaching**. They love His **miracles**. They respect His **example**. But people do not naturally honor Him as **Savior** - as the **Lord sent from heaven** to redeem mankind - unless the Spirit draws them.

Look at how Jesus described the **natural response** to His saving, ruling presence:

John 3:19-21 - "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and **people loved the darkness rather than the light** because their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone who does wicked things **hates the light and does not come to the light**, lest his deeds should be exposed. [21] But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

Here's the rule: people **run** from the saving rule of Jesus until they **yield** to the Holy Spirit. And here's another clue to the Holy Spirit's drawing work: He draws people specifically to the **cross** of Jesus. It's His **atonement** that comes first - not His **teaching** or His **example**. The Spirit draws people to the cross first.

Let me close making this central point. John presses for **authenticity** in this verse. I can't simply **pronounce** myself a Christian. I can't sign up like I become a Conservative or a Liberal or a Costco member. There must come a **yielding** of the entire heart to the will of the Spirit. God is willing to save whoever comes to Him through Christ. But He won't **half save** anyone. He saves **concretely and specifically**, not **marginally and loosely**. He honors the work of His Son to have its **fully intended impact** on our hearts.

His is always a **potent, drastic, fearful grace**. Like Lucy and Peter's conversation in "**The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe**" as they describe Aslan, the picture of Christ, "**He's a good lion, but he's not a tame lion.**"