

We Dwell in Him and He in Us

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 June 2023

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We are going to sing now some verses from Psalm 31, Psalm 31, and verse 19 through to the end of the psalm.

How great's the goodness thou for them that fear thee keep'st in store, and wrought'st for them that trust in thee the sons of men before. In secret of thy presence thou shalt hide them from man's pride, from strife of tongues thou closely shalt as in a tent them hide.

All praise and thanks be to the Lord, for he hath magnified his wondrous love to me within a city fortified. For from thine eyes cut off I am, I in my haste hath said, my voice yet heard's thou, when to thee with Christ my moan I made.

So on to the end of the psalm, Psalm 31, from verse 19. How great's the goodness thou for them that fear thee keep'st in store.

How great's the goodness thou for them that fear thee keep'st in store, and wrought'st for them that trust in thee the sons of men before.

[1 : 45] In secret of thy presence thou shalt hide them from man's pride.

From strife of tongues thou closely shalt, as in a tent them hide.

All praise and thanks be to the Lord, for he hath magnified his wondrous love to me within a city fortified.

For from thine eyes cut off I am, I in my haste hath said, my voice yet heard's thou, when to thee.

With Christ my moon I made. O love the Lord, O love the Lord, O ye his sins, he calls the Lord, O God.

[3 : 44] The faithful and he blanchlessly, thou doer'st to reward.

Hear your good courage and his strength, until your heart shall send.

On Jesus' hope and confidence, that on the Lord depend.

Amen. Amen. I'd like us to turn back to the chapter that we read in the New Testament scriptures, the first epistle, general of John, chapter 4.

and we can read at verse 13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us because he hath given us of his spirit.

[5 : 12] Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us because he hath given us of his spirit. Amen. When you read through the chapter as a whole you will find that the emphasis that is in the chapter is on encouragement to the Lord's people so that they may be persuaded that they are of that number who know the Lord indeed.

And the reason for that encouragement to be supplied to them is that they are constantly finding their faith challenged by those who surround them in the world.

You might not think that that you might think that that is not something that is unusual because clearly for the Christian living in the world they can understand and should understand that the the world is a place of opposition opposition to the faith of the Lord's people.

But sometimes what you find is that such opposition can come from unlikely sources. And that is what John has to deal with.

He has to deal with a situation where the opposition is coming from those who profess should be God's people.

[7 : 14] And yet John emphasizes that mere profession in itself is not sufficient. And that there are those whose desire is to proclaim a gospel that there is that there is no gospel.

Now that is probably undergirding everything he has to say. And when we read through the chapter we find that he brings to light evidences that present to us grounds for believing that what we believe is right.

And that what we believe is of the substance of the faith. Now when we get to verse 13 here you'll notice that there is a link word hereby know we that we dwell in him.

And for the theologian for the person who reads the scripture with an intense desire to know what that link word is linking to.

It's not immediately obvious because it could be linking with what has gone before and at the same time it could be linking with what is yet to be said.

[9 : 13] He might be looking backwards to what he has just declared concerning the faith of God's people that is emphasized by their love to God and their love to one another.

Or it could be a division in the chapter that now moves on to a forward look to what marks them out as God's people but in a different way.

In other words he has just addressed the critical evidence that should mark out God's people that they have a love to God and that they have a love to God's people and now he addresses another evidence that is equally important and that is that those who are God's people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit they are under the tutelage of the Spirit God is in them and they are in God and that is something quite remarkable is it not that God's people are a people that are indwelt by his Spirit and it is the

God I think we have to be careful in the sense that when I was looking at this there is the danger I suppose that you could draw a line under this the words that have been declared first of all and say well that that's one category and now he's moving on to a sub category or a different category of truth but he doesn't mean us to do that he means us to understand that the person who loves the Lord and is loved by the Lord is the person who is at the same time indwelt by the Lord and because they are indwelt by the Lord they love the Lord's people and they love the Lord they're not things that you can separate out from one another it is important to remember because the

God who loves is the God who indwells and yet for the sake of a logical pursuit of the argument that he is making he means us to understand that there is this evidence that the believer can recognize as being something that marks them out you come back again to this he the apostle means the Christian believer to possess an assurance that they are of this number that belong to God and that at the same time God belongs to them and that because of that they are remarkably different in a world that is at all times opposed to them and that there is a clear demarcation between them who love the

[12 : 58] Lord and are loved by the Lord and who are indwelt by the Spirit of God and those who make a profession of being of that number but are not because they lack these evidences in their life so that's where these words come from and the privilege that the believer has that allows them to consider what the apostle is saying and consider it as something that they can go to and take comfort from it a favorite statement that you find many Christians utter and I suppose one of them would say God is love and the apostle makes that point that God is love but when many people say that rather than making that statement as a statement of fact their thinking is perverse in the sense that the emphasis that is laid upon that statement is not just that

God is love but that God is loving now you're saying that's not perverse but it is perverse in the sense that it deviates from the fact that is stated that God is love because when you say that God is loving you're saying that in all instances that is the expression of the truth God is love when clearly it isn't let me quote to you the words of John Max Swin when he's talking about in the context of his comments I think it's later on in this chapter that he makes reference to God as a God of love and he makes an interesting point and it's worth remembering and noting God he says was always love there was never a time when God wasn't love and it is not said of him that

God loves but that God is love this love that God is finds its eternal exercise within the God head itself now that's important because you know to say that God loves or that God is love is meaningless unless there is an outlet for it or a focus for it which clearly there is within the Trinity because within the divine being there is an outlet for it in the sense in which God loves and God is love because God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit one God they love there is an expression of their love for each other even within the unity of the Trinity mysterious as that may appear to us but

Reverend Max Swin goes on to say it finds such eternal exercise in the love that is between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit there is this perpetual exercise of love eternally inevitably unchangeably between the persons of the God head now it is important for us to take that thought with us into our understanding of what John goes on to argue as far as the confidence that the believer has for they are the focus of this love which is whose source is in God and they are the focus of this love and the love that they enjoy and the love that they experience is an intra

Trinitarian love remarkable as it is and mysterious as it is which at the same time results in their experience of God being in them and them being in God you know when we talk about God and our relationship with God what do we talk about most often we talk about the experience of salvation we talk about ourselves being sinners saved by grace and it is as if you're talking about God being there and you being here and this transaction having taken place but it's much more intimate than that it is much much more the experience of God doing in Christ Jesus what he speaks of here in this chapter also he speaks of the role that

[18 : 42] Christ has to play in the salvation of sinners and so on but there is the understanding the consequence of that love is the intimate relationship that results from that love finding fruition in the experience of those who come to believe in Jesus Christ Christ now as I said there were those to whom this word was being delivered this word was being written who were finding themselves the focus of the antagonism of some not all but some who believe themselves to be super spiritual some who believed themselves that the experience they had of God was a higher order of experience and those who did not have this experience of God were in some sense lacking in their relationship with God they were belittling it they were making it of little or no consequence but John wants them to understand that if they have experienced the love of God if they have responded with love to God if they are of that number that God has loved then God is in them and they are in God and in that sense they share the same experience with every other child of God without exception and there is no variation in the sense in which that is true of them and they have every right to believe that what is theirs is what belongs to God's people love in the sense in which

John is addressing the circumstances into which he is preaching here there is no such thing as a better Christian as far as this experience of the love of God is concerned there is no such thing as a better Christian in the sense that God is more in a person or less in a person because it can't be now there is no doubt that a person can have degrees of knowledge and degrees of Christian experience but as far as these fundamental experiences are concerned there is no difference every Christian is the same in this respect and the apostle insists that all Christians are the focus of the love of God and not only loved but loved savingly look at the words of verse 9 and 10 in this was manifest the love of God toward us because that

God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him here in his love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins the direct consequence of the love of God in Christ Jesus is that they love him in response to that love that he has for them but a second evidence which accompanies it which may and probably should be considered of equal weight is that the saving relationship that they have with Christ is accompanied with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and if you notice the word that we have here in verse 13 hereby know we that we dwell in him you find it variously translated that we are dwelling in him abiding in him or that we are residing in him but just trying to get to the heart of the meaning of this as I said remarkable relationship that God has entered into with the believer by virtue of his own saving grace and the overarching picture that we have conveys to us the mutual experience it's

God in us and us in God now that's difficult to explain it's difficult to understand even but it is something that we know that Christ himself spoke of even before he left the world if you remember when he was speaking to to the disciples he spoke to them of this relationship that was going to be a fixture in the experience of the church of Christ this is I think if I understand the passage rightly John's concern is not so much for the individual within the church but with the church's experience as a whole that those who make up the church those who are believers in Christ within the church this is their universal experience as Christian believers

Jesus says in John 14 I will pray the father and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever you've comfortable enough with that no doubt the spirit the spirit is in the company is in the circuit in which you live and move and have your being but he goes beyond that even the spirit of truth in the world cannot receive because it saith him not neither knoweth him but you know him for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you he says that is the promise that Christ gives and I'm sure the disciples were scratching their heads and trying to understand what that meant what could it possibly mean and we know that this has happened and this is the experience of the believer and it's something we should remind ourselves of because if we think of

[26 : 07] God being out there and us being down here and in some way God being so remote from us that our relationship with him is in some way affected by that thought but if you think of him being not just with you but in you which is what he is saying what Christ was saying about the comfort and about the Holy Ghost that he would be in you then there is a clear close association or relationship there now the thing that we have to glean from this passage is that there are those who say that they are his but they do not have the spirit so they cannot be his you can see how in verse 15 and verse 16 both evidences are paired together whosoever shall confess that

Jesus is the son of God God dwelleth in him and he in God and we have known and believed the love that God hath to us God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him the indwelling of the spirit and the indwelling of the love of God are together in that instance but what do we we have to ask the question what does it what does it for me to know and for you to know whether this is true of us that God is in us as well as God being with us how can we possibly be assured that that is what makes me what I am as a believer how can I have that assurance well the first thing we must say is that the person who is able to say this must have faith in

Jesus Christ it sounds obvious but without the ability to say that it cannot be true of any person that they love God or are loved by God or are the dwelling place of God it cannot possibly be true and nothing else matters if it corresponds for example there may be evidences that you would say well I can cite these evidences I can recognise these evidences of me being in a relationship with God he's talking for example just go back to the love that the people of God have and that you are meant to love the people of God and you would say well I have this evidence I love

God's people and there may well be people who can say that they love the Lord's people that they love Christians but their love for the Christian might be based on the wrong premises or on the wrong type of relationship because here the apostle John insists that the love that we have for the Lord's people is based on the faith that is in Christ Jesus look at John chapter 20 and there the Lord is speaking to his disciples concerning his own word and what the biblical record says of him the complete word that contains within it all that is necessary for the salvation of sinners speaks of his activity in the world it speaks of his miracles it speaks of his sermons it speaks of all that he has done and he says of that that it is sufficient these are written that you might believe that

Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you might have life through his name this is the thing the person who is confident in his assertion that he is a believer is a person who has the witness of the spirit within him and the witness of the spirit to his life being in accord with the word where belief in Christ is taken in to confess Christ as Lord is necessary but do not think of it as a simple rehearsal of words which is what some some often believe all you have to do is speak certain words as if you're going to speak these words as a magic rite that would satisfy

[31 : 57] God in some way because you've said them there is more to it than that if you go back to the previous chapter what you find in chapter 3 is this this is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another as he gave us commandment and he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him and hereby know we that he abideth in us by the spirit which he hath given us now what is it that is true about that well clearly those who have his word obey his word those who believe in him they mark out their relationship of faith with him by their obedience to his revealed word that's what this highlights for us is that there is obedience to be seen in the word of

Christ obedience to the word of Christ because to you one of the divine Salford Plumer in talking about Christian experience and he says conduct is not only not a matter of indifference but is all important how you behave what you do is all important we may possess many kinds of enlightenment intellectual and spiritual but there is no union with God and indeed no true knowledge of him without obedience obedience to his revealed will obedience to the word of truth obedience where it presents to us what we must do and what we can't do and that is itself proof positive of whether the belief that we profess in

Christ is all it should be the proof of God's abiding present according to John is obedience John Stort in his comments says there are three commands for you there that you can identify put simply three commands you believe in Christ you love the brethren and you possess a moral righteousness and the possession of a moral righteousness is the outliving of your faith in accordance with the revealed word of truth without that it is not possible to to believe yourself to possess the love or to be the focus of the love of God or to be in possession of the Holy Spirit of God as he dwells in you as the God of heaven means him to do we can also to follow the example of the apostle

Paul see evidences of the indwelling spirit of God by the fruit of the spirit you know how he writes he says the fruit of the spirit and he lists all these which are fruits but at the same time they are evidences of the presence of Christ in our life love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self control all of these things are part of the experience of the believer and they speak most clearly and loudly about the relationship that is a relationship of faith and the evidence for it which is the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit most Christians would agree that the fruit itself is proof itself of the authenticity of the gospel and the authenticity of the fact that we have believed in the one of whom the gospel speaks

Paul would argue it is a direct consequence of Christ living in us and the activity of the Holy Ghost such fruit cannot be in evidence without it and Christ tells us that we will be recognised by our fruit and in the final judgment what fruit we bear will confer to us whether the relationship was a relationship of faith or not but the thing that we can also remember and John does not mean us simply to look forward to the day of judgment in the hope that when we get there this fruit will be there that we will see the evidences there or the evidences will be recognised by God and he will say yes there it is and this is for

[37 : 36] God's eye eye no what John is saying this is something that is for you eye for the church eye for the believers eye that they may see and know with certainty that the life they are living is the believer's life the privileges that they have are the privileges that belong to a believer that the love that is shed abroad in their heart is from one source and it is to be disseminated in response to those who share that love those who are fellow believers and the confidence you have as a result the assurance you have is rightfully used and the confession of faith amongst other documents insists that it is possible for the believer to come into possession of this assurance but surely this is where you find it this is where you come to it through the word of

God telling you how God works in your life and what that means to your life and the confidence that inspires in you as you live your life here in this world surely is a genuine one and a lasting one and it's not one that leaves you in dread against the day of judgment you go on in this life knowing the assurance that God has deliberately put within your grasp well may God bless to us these few thoughts on this word let us pray the Lord of God we seldom take what you give to us without being fearful that we are in some way failing to appreciate that what you have given is rightfully ours we fear presumption we fear that the things that you have given to your people that for some reason they are not ours to possess and yet if we genuinely believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ as the alone saviour of sinners if we have trusted in him for the salvation of our soul if we have experienced his love in our lives and if we have reciprocated it in obedience to your revealed word we have every right to understand the implications of that so allow us to possess the truth as that truth that you have placed within our grasp in order to encourage us in a world that is full of discouragement for your people watch over us each one we pray cleanse from every sin in Jesus Christ name we ask it Amen I'm going to conclude singing some verses from Psalm 18 singing in Gaelic Psalm 18 and at verse 60 five six feet to hop twelve course seven six smile yach you

Thank you.

Thank you.

[42 : 50] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Give me grace, measure and peace in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[45 : 14] at rest and I pray to you all over and all this. Amen.