

Experience and Evidence of Fellowship with God 1

John 5v1-12

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[0 : 00] So it's the first book of John, chapter 5, verse 1-12, page 1228 in the Church Bibles. So, 1 John, chapter 5, verse 1-12.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God, by loving God and carrying out his commands.

This is love for God, to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.

And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water, and the blood. And the three are in agreement.

[1 : 14] We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater, because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.

Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he does not believe the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He who has the Son has life, but he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Amen. Thanks very much, Stephen.

Well, let's keep our Bibles open as we come to a conclusion in these next couple of weeks in this letter of 1 John.

Let's pray and ask for God's help. Amen. Our Father God, we thank you so much for your word.

[2 : 28] We thank you for its truth. And we thank you that it is relevant and speaks to us in our day and in our time.

But Father, we need your help. We need the help of your Holy Spirit. And that we, together, would become more and more confident and assured of the life that we can have from you.

So please help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this week, if you were listening to the news, a painting by the artist Francis Bacon was sold for \$50 million.

There was another one that broke that record as well, but one of his sold for \$50 million. Although he was a very talented and a very successful artist, his view of life was empty and unfulfilled.

This is how he understood life to be. Man now realizes that he's an accident. That he is a completely futile being and that he has to play out the game without reason.

[4 : 12] He didn't believe in the person of Jesus. And for him, he had no purpose to life. He also said this, life has no reasons.

A struggling through the gloom. And the senseless end of it is the insult of the tomb. For him, he says, we've come from nowhere and we are going nowhere.

We simply live and we die and that's all there is to life. But that's not it. Have a look at verse 11 from our reading.

And this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life. The God who created life, the universe. The God who sustains all of life. The God who provides us with life has promised us eternal life. And look where that life is to be found.

[5 : 19] Verse 11. This is the testimony. God has given us eternal life. And this life is in his Son.

So we won't find life in ourselves. We won't find it in other things or in other people. We find life in the person of Jesus Christ.

It's only when we are in relationship with Jesus. It's only when we join in and share in the love the Father has for the Son. And that the Son has for the Father.

That we experience life in all its fullness. It is life in fellowship with God. Life is to be found in Jesus. And if we have Jesus, we have life. Look at verse 12. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

[6 : 27] Now, we must grasp how serious this is. John has already made it clear in his Gospel. In John 3 verse 36, he said this.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. But whoever rejects the Son will not see life. For God's wrath remains on him.

You see, to live life without Jesus is to face the terrible reality of an eternal separation from God. And it's what Jesus calls hell.

It's an eternity without the good gifts from God. The good things that we all enjoy like friendships, laughter, beauty.

All of these are good gifts from the God who made the universe. And he gives it to his creation. But to live life without Jesus is in effect saying, I want an eternity without God.

[7 : 30] Without all the good things that he has to give. It is an eternity in hell. So can we see how essential it is that we have Jesus?

Because there is no life to be had. No true life to be had outside of the person of Jesus. Look at verse 12 again.

He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Now there's two big questions we're going to ask of our text this morning.

The first one is this. How do I know I have this life? And the second is, how do I know this life is true? So how do I know I have this life?

And second, how do I know this life is true? So the first question, how do I know I have this life? How do I know I have Jesus?

[8 : 37] Well the answer is this. We know because we have the experience of being born of God. Look at verse 1 of chapter 5.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. We get the same phrase a little bit further down in verse 4. Do you see it there?

For everyone born of God overcomes the world. You see that little phrase, born of God, is to receive the life of Jesus.

It's to receive the true life from God. On the 14th of December 1971, at 5.30am, I was born.

Almost down the toilet, my mother told me. But I survived that. Now the thing is about my birth, I had no part in that decision. I did not decide that I would be born on that date and that I would have life.

[9 : 44] My birth was my parents' choice and decision. In the same way, eternal life that I have received from God is God's choice and God's initiative.

It's God's birth of life in me. And that's what gives me absolute assurance that I have life in Jesus. Eternal life, life with him, rests not in my choice or my decision, but in me receiving by faith God's gift of life to me.

This is something that God births in us. So how do I know I have this life? How can I be sure that I have been born of God and that I belong to him and that I have the life of Jesus?

Well, we need to look at the experience of our lives. Three things that we should be experiencing in our lives day to day that tell us that we have this life.

[10 : 53] Here's the first one. We believe that Jesus is the Christ. First one again. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

Now Christ, Jesus Christ, that's a title. It means God's chosen saving king. So to believe that Jesus is the Christ is simply to entrust your life into the hands of our saviour Jesus.

Because Jesus died for my sins, because Jesus rescues me from the punishment that I deserve, I will entrust my life into his life.

Rather than run away from Jesus, I will run to Jesus. And this should be our experience on a day-to-day basis. Instead of hiding my sin, I will repent of my sin.

I will place my full and total confidence in Jesus Christ, God's saving king. That is my experience. That I will be running to him as my saviour every day.

[12:05] So if I have been born of God, I will believe that Jesus is the Christ. The second experience that we should have in our life is that we will love the children of God.

Look at verse 2. This is how we know that we love the children of God. By loving God and carrying out his commands.

And what's his commands? Well, have a look back at chapter 3, verse 23. We know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out his commands.

What's his command? Chapter 3, verse 23. And this is his command. To believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ, which we've just looked at.

And to love one another as he commanded us. You see, when we are born, every one of us, we carry with us the DNA of our parents.

[13:08] So it's quite natural that as I get older, I begin to look more like my father. Sometimes I'm told I sound like my father.

Something of who he is makes me who I am. And in the same way, if we are born of God, something of who God is, his character, his very nature, is being seen and being worked and lived out through us.

Because God is love, those who are born of God will also love. That is the primary identifying mark that we are his.

So look at chapter 4, verse 7. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. So let's just stop a minute, let's pause and let's think about that.

[14:14] Let's ask ourselves, are we loving others deliberately and intentionally? Rather than self-centred, are we becoming self-sacrificing?

Because love means, I will embrace discomfort for the comfort of others. Love means, I will accept inconvenience in my life for the encouragement of others.

Love means, I will reject me time. In fact, there is no longer any me time. It becomes other time. I will serve others. Are we deliberately and intentionally moving from self-centred living to self-sacrificing living?

If we don't desire, if we are not praying for this, if we are not displaying this kind of love, then we are not born of God.

[15:22] So we should experience a running to Jesus, believing in him. We should experience a love for other people.

And third, we should experience a love to obey God's commands. Look at verse 3 of chapter 5. We've talked about loving others.

Well, verse 3, this is love for God. To obey his commands. To obey his commands. Now, parents have commands for their children.

I'm sure all of you, if you have children, you've got certain rules that you have in your household. Not to spoil their fun, but to actually protect their life.

So a parent who sets no boundaries for their child and lets their child do whatever they like, if you want to go outside until 10 o'clock at night, even though you're only six, that's okay.

[16:25] For example. It's not a loving parent. They are a careless parent. They set rules and boundaries and give commands to their children because they love their children and they want their children to enjoy life, to be protected.

And if we are born of God, we have a Father who has given us commands for our good. Not to spoil our fun, but so that we can enjoy life with him as it should be.

So the things that he calls us to do, the life he calls us to live, is for our best and for our good. In fact, if we are born of God, God's commands will become to us a delight and a joy.

Look at verse 3 again. This is love for God, to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

How many times have we ever heard rules not being a burden? We tend to think of rules and God's commands to us as a burden. But if you are obeying God because it's a duty to perform, if we obey God because we're doing it because we fear him punishing us, then we've completely misunderstood.

[17 : 49] We don't have the life of God. Children of God obey not to earn acceptance, but because we have acceptance.

We obey not to gain life, but because we have already received life in Jesus. Our obedience to God is an expression, it's an overflow to say, thank you so much for the life that you have given me. And I want to enjoy the life that you have given me. You see, if we understand that God's commands bring joy and happiness to his children, then obedience will be a pleasure and a delight. So think through that with me for a moment. As we read God's word, because that's where we will hear his voice, and that's where we will hear his commands, as we read it, and it challenges us. Do we go, don't want to do that? Don't like that? Or do we stop and go, this is a pleasure and a delight. Because I am his child, this is good for me, and this is right for me.

[19 : 02] If we are born of God, we will be obeying God. That will be our experience. Now if we believe Jesus is the Christ, if we love the children of God, if we obey God's commands, that experience tells me that I have been born of God and that I have eternal life from God.

In fact, it means, as he tells us in verse 4, he explains it in another way. He says, you've overcome the world. The same thing, but in another way. Look at verse 4.

For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Now we've seen this already in 1 John, that when he talks about the world, he's talking about people who are in opposition to God.

So the world is those who reject and ignore God's Son, Jesus Christ. But if we've been born of God, it means we've overcome the world.

Instead of rejecting Jesus, we now entrust our life to Jesus. Instead of loving self, we now love others. Instead of disobeying God, we now want to obey God.

[20 : 19] This is the experience of being born again. It's a complete transformation of life. We're not any longer like the world. We're not the same as the world.

We don't blend into the world. We stand out as different from the world because we have overcome the world. And it's all, verse 4, the end of verse 4, by faith, by our trust in Jesus Christ.

As it says in verse 5, who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. So how do I know I have this life?

How do I know I have the gift of eternal life and Jesus living within me? Answer, I have the experience of being born again.

The second big question that we're going to ask of this text, and we'll be a bit quicker through this section, is how do I know I have that this life that I have is true?

[21 : 32] How do I know that this life is true? Well, answer, we have the evidence of God's testimony. You see, the life that is found in Jesus is not made up.

This isn't a fairy tale. It's true. It's not a legend or lies. He wants us to know that this is true and we can depend upon it.

So let's look at the evidence that he gives us. Look at verse 6. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.

He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth. Wait, I'm sure you're scratching your head as I did the first few times I read this.

What's all this about? Water, blood, spirit? How is that evidence? Well, look at verse 7. For there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

[22 : 44] And the three are in agreement. Now I think the best way to help us through this is if we could imagine a court scene. And the question that is being asked is this, how do we know that the life of Jesus is true?

Where's the evidence that Jesus is true? And the life that he has promised to give us is real. Well, three witnesses are called to the stand. The water, the blood, and the Spirit.

And so what we're called to do is to listen to their story, to examine their story, and as we listen, you will see that this is true, the life of Jesus is true.

So the first witness to take the stand is water, the voice of the Father. Look at verse 6 again.

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. What's that referring to? Well, remember, the public ministry of Jesus started with his baptism.

[23 : 56] That's where, if you like, Jesus was fully and truly introduced to the world. So have a look with me back at Mark's Gospel, chapter 1. Keep your finger in 1 John 5 and go back to Mark's Gospel, chapter 1.

Mark 1, verse 9 to 11. So it's saying that Jesus came by water.

He was introduced to the world through his baptism. Mark 1, verse 9. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth and Galilee.

You all there? Mark 1, verse 9. Let's read again. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth and Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

and the voice came from heaven, you are my Son whom I love. With you I am well pleased. The Father declares from heaven in an audible voice, he declares to us all who Jesus is.

[25 : 17] You are my Son whom I love. With you I am well pleased. A clear identification of who Jesus is. To be identified as the Son was to be a position of absolute power and supreme authority.

This was Jesus, the God-man coming to earth and beginning his public ministry. The one who came to give life.

So the testimony of water is to say, listen to the voice of the Father. God himself speaking about who Jesus is.

Listen to his voice and you will know that it is true. The second witness to take the stand is the blood.

The work of the Son. Go back to 1 John chapter 5. We read there in verse 6, 1 John chapter 5 verse 6, this is the one who came by water and blood Jesus Christ.

[26 : 22] He did not come by water only but by water and blood. Blood always refers to the death of Jesus, his sacrifice on the cross because that was the very mission of Jesus.

The reason Jesus came, the primary reason was that he would die on the cross. So in 1 John chapter 1 verse 7, we're reminded of what the blood achieves for us, what his death achieves for us.

1 John chapter 1 verse 7, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, sorry, I'm rushing ahead of you there.

1 John chapter 1 verse 7, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son purifies us from all sin.

Or chapter 2 verse 2, he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. The blood of Jesus, his death on the cross was not like any other death.

[27 : 38] It was unique in the history of the world. It is the means by which we can be forgiven. It's the means by which we can come in and enjoy life with God. And how do we know that's all true?

Well, because we know that three days later Jesus rose from the grave proving that his blood, his death on the cross was the way in which sins would be dealt with forever.

So the blood comes and he takes the stand and it's as if he's saying, look, at Jesus on the cross. Look at the work of the Son and you will know that this Jesus is true.

The third witness to take the stand is the Spirit. The Spirit of truth. We read in verse 6, the end of verse 6 of chapter 5, and it is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.

You see, the Spirit of God takes what is true about Jesus and applies it to our hearts. Have a look with me back, just one more reference.

[28 : 57] Again, keep your finger there in 1 John 5 and go to John's Gospel chapter 15. This tells us something about the role and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John's Gospel chapter 15 and verse 26. John 15 verse 26.

John 15 verse 26. When the counsellor comes whom I will send to you from the Father. And who's that counsellor? He is the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father.

He will testify about me. He will speak about me. Jump over to chapter 16 verse 13. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.

He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you.

[30 : 30] Do you see the work of the Spirit? The Spirit of God takes the truth about Jesus and He puts it into our hearts to convince us and to reassure us that Jesus is true.

The Spirit acts like the final concluding piece of the evidence. He takes everything that has been said about Jesus and He drives it deep into our hearts. He testifies to us that this is true.

So the testimony is listen to the voice of the Father speaking at Jesus' baptism. Look at the work of the Son of Jesus on the cross.

Learn from the truth of the Spirit and you will know that this is true. So we have heard the evidence, the water, the blood and the Spirit taken together they show us that this life is true.

Verse 9, 1 John chapter 5 verse 9, we accept man's testimony but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God which He has given about His Son.

[31 : 49] Yes, man's testimony is important. That's how he started off the letter, talking about the eyewitness accounts. Man's testimony is important. What we experience about Jesus is vital but, verse 9, God's testimony is greater.

It's like God calls Himself to the witness stand. God puts Himself on trial and God gives the evidence. You see, just think about the whole story of Jesus.

Nobody could ever make this up. Nobody could ever invent a story or create a philosophy that matches the truth about Jesus. No one could ever come up with the idea of God, Father, Son, and Spirit giving testimony to us.

This is not something that just suddenly comes up in our imagination. This is the very revelation of God. Jesus is not our idea. He is God's Son.

God Himself come to earth and God has given testimony about it. So, don't believe it because I say it. don't believe it because it sounds like a nice story.

[32 : 59] Believe it because God has said it. Verse 10, anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.

Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

there is no greater word to have than the word of God to our lives. So, how do I know about the eternal life in Jesus?

I have the experience of being born again. How do I know this life in Jesus is true? I have the evidence of God's testimony.

We can be absolutely sure and fully convinced of the life that we have. Let's pray together.

[33 : 59] Amen. Our Father God, we recognize that we go into a world that is opposed to you, a world that does not believe that Jesus is the life, a world that will shirk their shoulders and turn away from truth.

So, would you please encourage us from what we've heard that we can go with absolute confidence and complete assurance that this life is real and that this life is true.

And we pray that you would give us opportunity to show how it is true, to point out the evidence so that others may be convinced and turned towards you.

and we pray that even in our own lives, that as we believe in Jesus, as we love others and as we obey his commands, that even through these very actions, people would see that you are real and that the life that you have come to give is true.

Father, encourage us and build us up in our faith, we pray, giving us courage to speak of you and to live for you.

[35 : 54] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing together a great hymn as we've been thinking about the life of Jesus in Christ alone my hope is found.

He is my light, my strength and my song. Here, in the love of Christ, I stand. Let's stand together then as we sing.