

The Witness Of The Holy Spirit to the Christian Believer

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[0 : 00] Well now let's turn to Romans 8 and our focus will be on verse 16, the witness of the Holy Spirit to the Christian believer.

Now I've been saying a couple of weeks at least that we're concluding our study in the series on the personality of the Holy Spirit but like all true preachers in their sermons they have a few conclusions so I'm still concluding.

But I thought that this might be good seeing as how we're on holiday from Monday just to round it off today with this last sermon.

It's not the only one there could be but it seems useful to finish at this point the witness of the Holy Spirit to the Christian believer.

And Paul says the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

[1 : 19] And the idea of a witness here is obviously the telling of something to us that lets us know that this is the way it is. You have the obvious example of the witness in court and you need more than one witness to confirm a thing and they tell out the evidence.

And there are all sorts of ways you can look at the witness of human beings to certain perceived facts.

And Paul says here that it is something that is vital to being a Christian to have the Holy Spirit. We read earlier on in the passage if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he is not Christ.

So it's obvious that to have the Holy Spirit is essential to being a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we're familiar with, in the ordinary things of life, we're familiar with little clues given or indicators given that a person is in this camp or that camp.

We sometimes see on the television the red dot of the Hindu telling more than just that so and so is a Hindu. But we have these little signs and sometimes people use maybe a handshake or a word that indicates to belong to this club or that club or this society or that.

[2 : 58] Something we're all familiar with. Or you may have a wee badge that is a sign of a fish. Tells that so and so is a Christian.

And there are all sorts of signs. But the sign from the Holy Spirit, the witness of the Holy Spirit is an internal witness based on the truth that the Holy Spirit brings to bear upon us.

And I want to look at that and expand on it today. Paul shows us, you see, that having the Spirit is to have him as the Spirit who adopts us into the family of God.

And then he says, you didn't receive the Spirit as a Spirit of bondage, but you received him as the Spirit of adoption.

He entitles us to cry out to God, Father, Abba, using that lovely, friendly name, Abba.

[4 : 12] And Paul shows us, you see, that this is something that the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit who adopts us into the family of God, enables us to do.

And the Apostle shows us that he had this consciousness himself. He felt it on the basis of the truth and the Spirit. He belonged to the Lord.

And that's the whole aim of the witness of the Spirit, to confirm to us that we, by faith in Jesus, belong to God.

And therefore, it's an important part of the Christian's life to have the witness of the Spirit. His witness is infallible because it's his.

His witness is assuring because it's his. He assures us that we are children of God through faith in Christ.

[5 : 12] But the moment you speak like that, you raise questions. You raise questions like, well, what is the witness?

You raise a question like, does a Christian necessarily have the witness? You raise a question like, well, how am I to know the difference between his witness and the false witness?

You see? These are legitimate questions that rise up. If you're thinking about this as an important subject, as something you want to know about and need to know about, then the question is, well, what is specifically this witness?

Do I necessarily need to have it? How do I know the difference between the Spirit's witness and false witness? These are three of the questions we want to look at.

First of all then, what is this witness? Well, we've already indicated that this is something the Holy Spirit of God gives to those who are Christ's.

[6 : 27] The Spirit himself, verse 16, bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

The Spirit himself communicates something to the spirit of a Christian believer. And that's something is a personal assurance that this one or that one to whom he gives this assurance is able to say, I am a child of God.

Now, we know that in the world around us, you hear it pretty frequently, well, we're all God's children, aren't we?

And that is simply theologically, biblically, not exactly the case. There's a sense in which, by reason of the fact that people are made in the image of God, that God gives life to them, life as we have it here.

We're God's children in a secondary sense. But in the primary sense, in the real sense of being an adopted child through faith in Jesus, of having the indwelling spirit, this is something that not everyone has.

[7 : 50] It's something that the Spirit of God gives us. We've been looking at that. It's something that the infinite Spirit of God, the personal Spirit of God gives to us.

And so is this witness. He conveys an assurance to us that we really belong to the Lord. But we're asking how this comes about.

Is it a personal word addressed to us quietly within us? And we hear him saying, you are a child of God. Well, the short answer is, we're saying no to that.

Some say, that's the way. And they're saying, well, it's a personal inner feeling of peace and contentment. I have this conviction that I am a child of God.

But that view is equally wrong. And it's easy to rule it out. Because the witness here is not of our own feelings, not of our own sense of tranquility.

[9 : 11] But of what the Spirit does. The Spirit bears witness. He bears witness to us so that something goes on within our spirit.

He brings to bear upon us something from himself. So you see, it's not down to a personal experience.

A personal inclination. Which we may or may not have based on our feelings. You know what it's like.

If you base things on your feelings, you're at sea. In fact, you're in a force ten. Metaphorically. If you base things on how you feel, you're absolutely in difficulty.

You're in the perfect storm. Because the day that your mood is fine and calm and tranquil, you may, as a person who thinks I am a believer in Christ, if your mood is good, you're fine.

[10 : 25] The season is fine and you're fine. But then when the storm breaks on your spirit and you feel dark and gloomy and uncertain and doubts arise, you are in the storm.

You can't see a flicker of light. And what I'm saying here is, if we rely simply on feelings, dependent upon our moods, then we're in trouble.

We must look elsewhere. It's not that audible voice to us. It's not that feeling I am. We must look elsewhere for an explanation.

We must look to what the spirit does within to assure us. And we must look, therefore, at the function of the word of God in relation to the spirit.

Those of us who were looking at this last week in the place of the danger of quenching the spirit, of stifling his ministry to us, you may remember that I referred to the seven churches in Revelation.

[11 : 48] And at the end of each of the addresses the Lord gives to the church, he says, listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches.

And it's listen to the word. To Sardis he said one thing, to Ephesus he said another, to Laodicea he said another, to Philadelphia another, and so on.

Oh yes, there were some things that clicked. But some things were quite different. And it was what the word said, that is the word of the spirit, to the churches.

And here we have the clue. The spirit operates in this way. There was a time, doubtless in the time when Revelation, Scripture was being put together, that the spirit spoke directly to the prophets.

A classic example is, in the New Testament anyway, is when the spirit moved, spoke to Philip, the evangelist, to go alongside the Ethiopian's chariot, to catch up with him, and to speak to him.

[13 : 11] And then the spirit whisked him away, and he was found elsewhere. These were times when, when God was working in a, in a very manifest way, an extraordinary way, because he was putting together, for the church, the word of God, the word of the spirit would use.

And so, the safest ground to be on, is the ground that takes the Bible, as the very word of God, as the word the spirit uses, to speak to our hearts, and to assure our hearts.

This is the one way, the safe way, we are left with, the way forward to consider, that the spirit's witness, is the witness in the word.

He uses the word. He takes the truth of Scripture, and he applies it to the believer. We're not left to our moods. We're not left to our highs and lows.

Rather, he powerfully confirms to us, in the word, that we have believed, on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are children of God, through faith, in him.

[14 : 36] And you see, this is what the spirit does. We were thinking about, just the other week, about the spirit himself, as the seal, upon our hearts.

But, the spirit is not only the seal, he seals the truth, in Jesus, to us. He, brings to bear upon us, that all the promises of God, are yea, and amen, in Christ.

and belong to those, who simply, take Jesus, as their Savior. And he confirms this, by holding up to our attention, that we are to have, a healthy attitude, to what Jesus says, to do.

His commandments, become precious to us. He, thereby, generates, assurance, in us.

And that, that's important to us, ought not to be minimized. John, we've been studying John, and hopefully, we'll get back to, 1st John. John says there, in chapter 3, verse 1, Behold, what manner of love, the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called, the children of God, and we are, he says.

[16 : 04] Beloved, now, we are, the children of God. It's not, his design, that we should not know. It's his design, that we should know, and be assured of this.

Well, that brings us, to my second question. Does a Christian, necessarily have, this witness? this. Now, clearly, the Apostle Paul had it.

He talks, as somebody, who is absolutely, settled, he had this, blessed assurance. The Apostles, the other Apostles, they had this, and disputed me.

many of the, New Testament, Christians, when they were, persecuted, and scattered, they went everywhere, proclaiming Jesus, and they had assurance, and they could, proclaim him freely, and in a, totally, unfettered way, because they had that.

You only need to think, about their boldness. They wouldn't be quiet, when the authorities, told them to shut up, or you'll be in prison. They kept going, everywhere, proclaiming Jesus.

[17 : 32] Proclaiming that is, he was to be received, by faith, that his death, was the way, whereby our sins, were dealt with, and peace with God, was brought.

They emphasize, that the proof, of all that, is that he lives, God raised him, from the dead. And they had assurance, to that effect.

That's why, they could witness, themselves. But it does not, follow from this, that all, had that assurance.

All had that, witness of the spirit. And that is, an important thing, to notice. If you read, in the church fathers, you read in the reformers, even somebody like, Calvin, who had a great mind.

Calvin himself, although he, clearly was a man, who had assurance, of the faith, he had the witness, of the spirit, to that effect. Calvin emphasizes, that not all, have assurance, who are the lords, who are Christ's.

[18 : 41] Because assurance, is not of the essence, essence, of faith. It may be right, to say, we ought to expect, to have assurance.

But itself, is not, inherent, it's not, an ingredient, of faith. Of true faith, of faith in Christ.

witness, the witness, has to do with, as we've been saying, assurance. An assurance, to the believer, of the fact, that he or she, is a child of God.

But not every, Christian, can say, I have this witness, which enables me, to say, I am, a child of God. And if you think about it, the Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

It doesn't say, believe and be baptized, and you shall be saved. It doesn't say, believe and be assured, and you shall be saved. It says, believe. And that belief, no doubt, is a saving grace.

[19 : 59] It is imparted, by the Spirit, no doubt, we believe, because of the work, of the Spirit in us, who shows us, our need of Christ, and who draws us, to Christ.

But belief, in Jesus, simple faith in him, trust in him, is first, and last. Assurance, is a great benefit, not to be despised benefit, much comfort benefit.

But scripture, never teaches, that it is essential, that it is essential, to faith. And there are Christians, as there were in the past, there are Christians today, who do not have, the witness of the Spirit, in that way.

Perhaps it's more accurate, to say, that not all Christians, that not all Christians, are aware, of the witness. I think that's more accurate, because sometimes, the witness is there, the Spirit is witnessing, but the folk are not taking it.

the Spirit is bringing, the truth in Jesus, and their cast of mind, is such, that they're finding ways, of not simply, resting in that.

[21 : 26] They're of a doubtful mind. They're of a turbulent spirit. Perhaps they're of a, a negative spirit. But the fact is, that there are Christians, therefore, who don't have that witness, in the way that they can say, I am, by faith in Christ, a child of God.

And that doesn't mean, that they will never have, the witness in this life. What it means, among other things, is that they have yet, to experience that witness.

And therefore, they can, and ought, to seek it. To seek it earnestly, and steadfastly. You see, there's a world of difference, between being serious, about, the witness of the Holy Spirit, to us, in the word.

And some, brazen claim, to being a Christian, and living like a heathen. We're talking serious stuff here.

We're talking about, the witness of the Spirit, which is important, to the believer. And if we don't have it, we are to seek it.

[22 : 50] We're to seek it. The Spirit would, would, would bring that witness, to bear upon us, and that we may hold on to it. And it seems to me, the obvious, from what we've said, the obvious way forward here, is to, have a, a prayerful, and close, and earnest attention, to what the Spirit is saying, in the word, to us.

to be listening to him, to be laying hold upon him. Actually, you know, time and again, the word can come to us, and we simply put it away.

This happened to me, on, Friday, I'm letting you into a secret, that's a secret no more. Perhaps I shouldn't even be telling you this.

But it hit me with such power, hours and hours afterwards. I was doing a little bit of, tidying up, to save others doing it, and so that others could finish it off, out there in the hall.

And I was emptying a box, at one of these plastic boxes. And I came across, a little leaflet, I don't know what it said inside, but on the outside it said, preach the word.

[24 : 14] And I didn't realise, I was quite dismissive, I just scrunched it up, and threw it in the box, of bits I was putting out. And that happened three times, preach the word, then blow me, it came up again, and I did the same thing, threw it away, and it came up again, later on, when I was finishing that, plastic box.

Preach the word, and afterwards, hours afterwards, in fact, the next day. It occurred to me, and it was very appropriate to me, that the Spirit was speaking, in the word.

Keep on preaching, the word. And I tell it to you, for this reason, the Spirit of God, can be speaking to us, in the word, and we're not listening to him, we're not taking, what he's saying to us.

That's important. Take what he says, don't push it away, don't dwell on the doubts, and the fears, and the anxieties, if he's bringing, a word of assurance.

The Spirit himself, bears witness, with our spirit, in the word, as is obvious, from what has gone before, and what follows.

[25 : 39] And he's assuring us, if we believe, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are children, of God.

And that brings us, to one last point. And it's a legitimate question too. How may, the witness of the Spirit, be distinguished, from false witness?

Now I hope you all, remember the sermon, on 1 John 4, verse 1, Beloved, do not believe, every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.

Because many false prophets, have gone out into the world. The witness of the Spirit, is to be tested. We're not, entitled to believe, any spirit, with any word.

We're, entitled to listen, to what the Spirit, is saying, in scripture. False, spirits, of false prophets, will turn us, away, from the truth, in Christ.

[27 : 00] They'll, undermine, our confidence, in this, that, that, simple faith, in Jesus, saves. And that, we live by faith, in the Son of God, who loved us, and who gave himself for us, and it is a false spirit, who will turn us away, from that.

It is the spirit of error, that will turn us, from that. It is the false spirit, who turns us away, from, believing, that God's promises, in Christ, are absolutely, trustworthy.

The false spirit, casts doubt on that. These false spirits, blur our, our mental, perception, blur, our minds, to what we really, do think, about Jesus.

The, the false spirits, don't want us, to be settled. They don't want us, to be resting, in Jesus, placing our all, in him.

The false spirits, don't want that. They're working, against us. They're polluting, our minds. They're drawing us, or they're trying, to draw us, away from it. The false spirits, will, will, will, will persuade us, that the commandments, of Christ, and of God, are not important.

[28 : 38] They don't really, matter, to the Christian life. And so you see, in these ways, the false spirits, seek to deceive us.

They seek to tell us, oh, if you're thinking, along these lines, if you're thinking, it's all about, a simple faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he died for you, and rose again for you.

If you're content, just to believe, all the promises, of God, are true in him, that's not enough. The false spirit, casts doubt, on all these things, and tells us, we're deceiving ourselves.

And we are to have, the sense, to discern, what is true and false. it is important, it is very important, to see, that it is right, to distinguish, between, the spirit of God, and the false spirits.

Consider this, as we finish. Consider the witness, of the spirit, in the believer, and to the believer, in the following ways. We know, that we have passed, from death, spiritual death, into spiritual life, because we love, the brethren.

[30 : 09] We love those, who are Christ. That, of course, is in, 1st John 3, 14. Going back, to 1st John 2, verse 3, we know, that we have, come to know him, because, we obey, his commandments.

We know, that we have, come to know him. Because, we obey, his commandments. His commandments, are not something, that are, dredgery anymore. We see, that we can live, by the spirit, and we can live, out the law, of the life, giving spirit.

1st John 5, verse 3, says this, this, this is the love of God, that we keep, his commandments, and that his commandments, are not, a burden, to us.

This is the love of God. And, these are evidences, from the spirit, they are the witness, of the spirit, to us. We are to embrace, these things.

We are to realize, that the spirit, is pointing us, in the right direction. He is witnessing, to us. that we are, the children, of God.

[31 : 29] Now, let's be clear, on the point, we are making here. We are not saying, this is a, it's a case of, we are Christ's, just because, we keep his commandments.

In other words, in some ways, there is a merit, that we gain, therefore we know, we are Christ. No, no, no, no. It's a case of, since we are Christ's, we live to keep, his commands.

You see, we are not, saved, and adopted, into God's family, because we earn, the right, by law keeping. No, no. The point is, it is because, we are saved, by the grace of God, through the work, of Christ.

Christ. We love his love, and we seek, to walk in it. And the spirit, will seal that, he will witness, to that. You are, a child of God.

Jesus said, regarding, the witness, of the spirit, if you really, love me, you will, keep my commandments.

[32 : 44] You find it there, in John, 14, 15, and 21. And so, what we are saying, is that the spirit, witnesses, in the word, and he relates, that word, to our whole attitude, to Christ, and to Christ's way.

And so, we have to be, on our guard, against, the false spirits, and we have to be, vigilant, and careful, to listen, to what the spirit, of God says, in the word, to us.

He warns us, about the importance, of receiving, the promises, in Christ, and resting, on those promises. Let's not be looking, for some, mystical, flash, in the sky.

But let's, recognize, to quote the psalmist, that the secret, of the Lord, is with those, who fear it. And fearing, the Lord, is walking, in his ways.

It is, concern, to live, for the Lord. And to live, for the Lord, the Lord's way, by the spirit, who witnesses, with our spirit, that we are, the children, of God.

[34 : 17] May it be, that today, here, he will confirm, that truth, to our hearts. Amen.