

1 John 4

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Jesus ruft zu Gott.

Scheinbar zu Wolkereisen, Herz so auf Präparation, Die Fließe gibt es sein.

Ruh' aus der Dunkelnacht, Bis die Nacht wegfliegt.

[00:01:03] Wir singen mit allen Blumen Die Geschichte des Tages.

Die Welt ist ein Land der Gläubigen, Wir sind ein glückliches Land, Und machen die Gläubigen glücklich, Die Gläubigen jeder Zeit.

Schlaflos sein ist der Menschheit, Der schloss sich auf uns hat.

[00:02:01] Schlaflos sein ist der Menschheit, Der schloss sich auf uns hat.

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[00:03:02] Schlaflos sein ist der Menschheit, Der schloss sich auf uns hat.

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[00:04:11] And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the spirit which he hath given us. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is

come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. [00:05:05] And this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world. We are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God.

He that knoweth God heareth us.

He that is not of God heareth not us.

Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.

[00:06:02] And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

[00:07:03] Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 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.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

[00:08:01] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us. Amen.

Dear brethren, in turning to this epistle I do so because I am convinced that the ministry of John is a recovering ministry.

The very last word spoken ecclesiastically to the churches in the book of Revelation goes like this. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what a Spirit saith to the assemblies.

[00:09:05] That word was written at the behest of our Lord by the same apostle who penned this epistle. And if in days of breakdown there is to be any element of recovery, it must start with affections that are warmed towards the Son of God.

So if the Lord helps me, I would like to speak a little about these verses that we have read together. In leading up to them, I would like to draw attention to the cardinal features of this epistle. The first chapter, by the way, speaks of fellowship. It speaks of fellowship with divine presence, that on behalf

of the apostles themselves. And they write to us, or they tell us in the first chapter, [00:10:05] that we might have fellowship with them. And truly, says John, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Chapter 2, by the way, you can look these things up for yourself, I'm only touching the pinpoints, that's all. Chapter 2 speaks so blessedly to us of the helps that are available in order that we might enjoy that sweet communion. Also, there is detailed to us a number of possible hindrances to our enjoying that fellowship. Chapter 3, praise God, leads on to the blessed ultimate, when we are going to say face to face, our blessed Lord, we've sung already tonight, [00:11:04] we go to meet the Savior. We are going to see him, brethren, and when we see him, we are going to be like him. He goes on to say in chapter 3, verse 3, He that hath his hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Chapter 5, skipping over chapter 4 for the moment, chapter 5 outlines to us the blessed threefold witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood. I wonder what they draw attention to, the sure and certain knowledge as of certain possession of eternal life. The water and the blood flowed from the side of our crucified Lord [00:12:01] when the spear pierced his side. I wonder why the Spirit of God is introduced in chapter 5, because these three we read are agreed in one. The Spirit has come down from our blessed Lord where he now is. He's not on the cross today, nor is he in the tomb.

When those women came early on the first day of the week to the tomb, they were wondering, who would roll us away the stone? When they got there, they found the stone already rolled away. The tomb was open.

Not only so, blessed be God, the tomb was empty. And there were those who said to them, why seek ye the living one among the dead? He is not here.

He is risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. [00:13:01] And entering in, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. They couldn't find him there, because not only was he risen, brethren, he had ascended and he's gone to glory. That's where he is tonight. And from himself, in his present place, with the Father's right hand, has come down from there the Holy Spirit to add his testimony to the witness of the water and the blood, to intimate to us so distinctly, so decisively, so clearly, that we have eternal life and this life is in God's hands. Well, having said that much, I think I can take up chapter 4, just before doing it. I would just simply say that the burden of the Gospel of John is the expression of God, [00:14:01] the bringing to light of the heart of God. The burden of this epistle is the manifestation of eternal life.

So it starts, just harking back for a moment, chapter 1, it starts with that which was from the outset. So here, in the end of chapter 3, I'll re-read that last verse. He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.

The obedient one knows the blessedness of communion. I wonder how this hymn refers to. It's so difficult to distinguish at times in John's first epistle whether he's speaking of our Lord [00:15:01] or whether he's speaking of the Father. I believe here, of course, that he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him may be a reference to the Father, and he in him a reference to the believer. Dwelling in him spells out to us in blessed sweet terms the blessedness of communion.

He in him, that is, God dwelling in the believer spells out unmistakably the blessedness of testimony. So on the one hand the path of communion is open to us. On the other, the path of testimony, both of them flow in blessed practical possibility [00:16:02] from the very element of obedience. He that

keepeth his commandments, obedience, the verse in the Old Testament, to obey is better than sacrifice.

And to hearken, the nephath of Rams, brethren, the way to the enjoyment of this sweet communion is the path of obedience. The way to power in testimony is the way of obedience.

I was thankful to hear our brother in his opening prayer praying along that line. The necessity of giving evidence of our blessed affection for divine persons by obedience, for obedience is the proof of love. So here, [00:17:02] hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.

The divine gift, dear brethren, is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And there are certain things flowing out from his activity as given to believers.

And I wish to just draw attention to them. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Believe not every spirit.

If you want to get the bearing of this spirit, I would turn your attention to the beginning of the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, [00:18:01] concerning manifestations of the Spirit. Not the Holy Spirit exactly, but the gifts of the Spirit. So here, in this chapter, there was the possibility that evil spirits were endeavoring to delude the saints of God. So we are exhorted here, try the spirits, whether they are of God. On this account, many false prophets have gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.

There is an asset test, dear brethren, as to ministry.

If perchance we have gathered to the Lord's name, in what we call the open character of fellowship, and someone gets up amongst us and begins to denigrate the Son of God, you can be assured [00:19:02] that he is not carrying out the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But here, every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.

One of the functions of the Holy Spirit, dear brethren, is to draw attention to this, the pre-incarnate deity of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is come.

There'd be no point in drawing attention to that expression if not, if there were not in it implicitly the testimony to his pre-incarnate Godhead. Jesus Christ come.

Thank God, our minds revert immediately to John's Gospel, chapter 1. [00:20:01] In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. Verse 14, And the Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us. The pre-incarnate glory of Jesus Christ is implicit in this expression. Jesus Christ is come.

But that's not the end of the statement, is it? Is come in the flesh.

In other words, there's a two-fold declaration here. The pre-incarnate glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace and charm of his incarnation.

Had he never taken upon himself flesh and blood conditions, you and I would never have known anything at all about God the Father. We would never have known anything about the blessedness [00:21:02] of that eternal life which was with the Father being manifested to us.

So here, this is one of the evidences of the Spirit of God's ministry. Every spirit.

Verse 2, That confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

Our brother in his prayer today, this evening, he made a remark to the effect that our Lord Jesus Christ has gone back to where he came from. But he hasn't gone back to where he came from as he came.

He's gone back there in abiding manhood. He cited a verse in John's Gospel. I'm going to cite another verse. John chapter 6, the Lord Jesus speaking to his disciples and those who were remurring against him speaking about giving his flesh and so on. [00:22:02] He said, what? And if he shall save the Son of Man, ascend up where he was before. He's carried manhood into glory.

But in so doing, dear brethren, he's opened heaven to men. You and I have a blessed hope for eternity as based upon the fact that he's gone back where he came from. But he's gone back there in abiding manhood. And in doing so, he's opened that blessed sphere to men such as you and me through infinite grace on the basis, of course, of an accomplished redemption. So here the Spirit of God lays emphasis on the fact Jesus Christ come in flesh.

And if that's the testimony of any brother who acts in the power but not his own, in the midst of the saints of God, [00:23:01] you can take it for granted he's energized by the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ has come in flesh is not of God.

And this is the Spirit of Antichrist, and so on.

Verse 4.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

The first feature of the Spirit of God in these verses, dear brethren, is to draw attention to the blessed fact that he's got the power and he administers the power in order that there might be a discernment on the part of the saints of God of the exercise of any spirits amongst the saints of God. [00:24:03] So here he says, ye are of God.

Could you appreciate, dear brethren, ye are of God?

If you do, you're on the very threshold of an eternity of blessing, because to be of God is indicative of the fact that you belong to the family of God. Ye are of God, little children. Not only so, you've overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. In reference, of course, to the Spirit of God. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. [00:25:01] The world system is dominated by Satan and his minions.

But he who dwells in the saints of God is greater than he that is in the world. They are of the world.

Therefore speak they of the world and the world heareth them. Now we come to the apostles in verse 6. He's been addressing up to this point the children of God.

He speaks now and says, we, the apostolic we, we are of God.

He that knoweth God heareth us.

He that is not of God heareth not us.

Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

[00:26:01] Brethren, we ought to be thankful indeed that we have the apostolic word before us. The apostles have long since gone off the scene. They were foundational gifts.

The apostles and prophets of the New Testament are in the foundation of the structure that's being reared up to the glory of God. But they, while they have disappeared from the scene, Hebrews 13 says, remember your leaders who have spoken unto you the word of God and imitate their faith.

Leaders come and leaders go.

But if they've fulfilled their divinely endowed ministry they'll have led your heart [00:27:01] to one who abides forever, Jesus Christ the same, yesterday and today and forever.

We are of God.

He that knoweth God heareth us.

This is another test, dear brethren, as to whether or no you and I are really what we profess to be. So we read here, He that knoweth God.

One of the evidences of my knowing God is that I pay heed to the apostolic word.

We don't need to go outside the Bible, dear brethren. We've got the apostolic testimony before us here. [00:28:01] And the apostolic ministry furnishes the sense of God in regard to the present place in the testimony of God. We are of God.

He that knoweth God heareth us.

Do you hearken to the apostolic word?

Very early in the history of the assembly we read this.

Speaking of those 3,000 who were added on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit historically first came down from a blessed man at God's right hand, they persevered in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread and of prayers.

If you were to hark back to the tabernacle system in the book of Exodus, [00:29:02] you'd find that that structure was held upright by four bars.

There was a central bar running through the entire structure.

The central bar, doubtless, is the type of the Spirit of God. And the four bars, I doubt not, dear brethren, are the four things I've just cited from Acts chapter 2. The apostles' teaching and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers.

He that is of God heareth us.

And if you hearken to the apostles, dear brethren, you'll identify yourselves with that with which they were glad to be identified. The assembly of God [00:30:02] in testimony here. The apostles' teaching formed a fellowship here. I'm not suggesting that's the fellowship of this epistle. It's in that fellowship, of course, that this fellowship can be enjoyed. But in that fellowship there was the ministry of the truth of the assembly gathering to Christ's name alone. Do you know anything about that, dear brethren? Do you know the value of gathering to Christ's name alone? If you do, your doing that is fruit of the apostolic testimony, the apostles' teaching and fellowship.

The breaking of bread which gives expression to the fellowship and prayers [00:31:01] that would sustain that fellowship. So he says here, we are of God.

He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth not us.

Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. So the Holy Spirit of God arms us, dear brethren, to test every attempt to delude us.

And how many there are, tells us in these earlier verses as we've read, many false prophets have gone out into the world. How many there are denying Jesus Christ come in flesh.

They are not of God at all. They might call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. They might call themselves [00:32:02] Latter Day Saints. They might call themselves a thousand and one things. But we are not dependent upon them for one iota of evidence as to who they might be because here we've got the acid test to test them all. The spirit of God in his blessed ministry makes much of Christ. So when we come into verse 7 chapter 4 Beloved let us love one another for love is of God.

Truth is of God we've been saying in these earlier six verses. Now we learn love is of God.

And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. So the spirit of God is the power [00:33:01] for discipleship. And if you want to be a true disciple of the Son of God you will hearken to the teaching of the spirit of God. And one of the first things that he teaches us in the path of discipleship is to exercise the divine nature one to another.

Let us love one another for love is of God. And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. It's a matter of interest for Bible students. If you read from the end of chapter 2 to the end of chapter 5 of this epistle you'll find there's a statement there about the definite marks of new birth. Nine features in all are given us in this epistle to identify to us those who are born of God. [00:34:01] This is one of them. This is the fourth one. Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

He that loveth not God, for God is love.

God is love.

Chapter 1 of this epistle says God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If that statement stood alone in this epistle there'd be no meetings here tonight.

Because God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

He's like terror in every human breast. I'm thankful to say that if you travel down another verse or two in chapter 1 of this first epistle you'll read this expression. If we walk in the light as God is [00:35:01] in the light. God is not only light dear brethren. Dispelling all the darkness but he's in the light. And if that means anything it means this dear brethren that God is revealed and he has been revealed and he's pleased to reveal himself as he has done in the person of Jesus Christ come in flesh. God is revealed in the blessedness of his relationship as father by that blessed person who subsists eternally in the relationship of son in the Godhead.

Coming into manhood he never relinquished that which was always true of him in pre-incarnate days. He carried it here in his incarnation the grace and the blessedness of his sonship.

There is a teaching abroad sadly [00:36:01] that sonship is by incarnation. The spirit stamps that as error. There is no such teaching in scripture as sonship by incarnation.

On the contrary the apostolic doctrine teaches us decisively this blessed fact of the incarnation of the son.

Dear brethren to touch the relationships of the Godhead is not a matter of optional acceptance. It's not optional whether we believe or we don't believe that relations in the Godhead are eternal.

It's absolutely imperative and vital to us that we hold what is the heart [00:37:01] of the faith system and that is the revelation of relationships with the affections proper to them in the bosom of the Godhead father and son.

The consciousness of that knowledge brought home to our hearts in the power of the spirit of God. Beloved let us love one another.

We learn in verse 9 then, that's verse 7 and verse 8 says he that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love. Thank God he's not only in the light but in the light he's revealed as love in his nature. Verse 9 says in this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live [00:38:01] through him.

I believe dear brethren implicit in this verse is the story of Bethlehem.

The grace of our blessed Lord, the son of the Father's love came here into this world.

It's cradled in a manger in order that you and I through infinite love and grace brought to God might know the blessedness of a life that neither sin nor death can touch. God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him. I believe dear brethren that this verse coalesces at the beginning of Ephesians chapter 2 where we get this blessed statement [00:39:01] dead in trespasses and in sins. What a dead soul needs is life. Where will we find it? We can only find it in the life giver

and the power of God that reached down to the tomb and took our Lord out of the grip of death transferred him from earth to glory as likewise spoken to you and to me and he spoke in life to dead souls. In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him.

Herein is love, [00:40:01] not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Not only were we in a state of death dear brethren without one spark of life toward God we were guilty sinners in our sins and the son of the father's love has been down into the depths of death at Calvary in order that a satisfactory answer to God might be given in regard to the whole matter of your sins and mine. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us. Isn't that charming? Not that we loved God but that he loved us. Just [00:41:01] think of God loving you and loving me.

He loved the unlovable and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God never looks for a reason in you or me.

He cannot find one. So here we read Beloved if God so loved us we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. Reminds us of that statement, doesn't it, in chapter one of the gospel. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten who is in the bosom of the father he hath declared him. [00:42:01] If we love one another God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us. If we've read already in verse nine about his love being to us here we are reading of his love being active through us. If we love one another God dwelleth in us. God dwelleth in us. Testimonially, dear brethren, if God dwells in us it's in order that a witness be born to him. And so we read here if we love one another God who otherwise is unseen will be brought to light in you and me.

If we love one another [00:43:01] God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit. So the spirit who is the power for discerning good and evil, the power for treading the path of true discipleship is equally the power for the energizing of our souls in the exercise of this blessed love of God one toward another. Verse 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

So the Spirit of God indwelling us is the power [00:44:01] for our sharing in this blessed witness. God bringing himself to light in testimony here as a Saviour God the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world. What a wonderful privilege dear brethren that you and I have this blessed opportunity of sharing in this divine testimony. The way we get into it of course is described to us in verse 15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is 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 [00:45:01] and God in him. God is love.

You and I have the privilege of knowing that enjoying that and responding to that. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.

Herein I'll read this a little differently. Herein is love with us made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

That's a forward look, isn't it? It's the day of judgment lying ahead. Just think of it. Love has been so

exercised to us that it's been made complete with us and in the fruit of that we have boldness in the day of judgment. And as [00:46:01] we read in the latter clause of that verse, because as he is so are we in this world.

Our Lord, dear brethren, having accomplished redemption is beyond judgment and you and I are as he is even now beyond judgment. If you were reading the Ephesian epistle, I would draw attention to the fact that we are accepted in the beloved. All that's true of him in his accepted manhood in the Father's presence is true of you and me who've trusted him as our Savior. Because as he is so are we in this world.

We're not waiting till we get to heaven to know this. We know it now. [00:47:01] Divine light is shed on the page of scripture for us. Because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

Amen. I'm going to give a hymn out and then perhaps some brother might read it.

Number 52.

Lord, we are thine.

Bought by thy blood, once the poor guilty slaves of sin, but thou redeemest us to God [00:48:01] and mayst thy spirit dwell within.

Thou hast our sinful wanderings borne with love and patience all divine as brands then from the burning torn we all that we are holy thine. Number 52. And then some brother will pray.

Thou hast our sinful wanderings [00:49:02] borne with love and patience all divine as brands then from the burning torn we all that we are holy thine.

Lord, we are thine.

Thine as we are all.

Thou hast our sinful wanderings borne with love and patience all divine as brands then from the burning torn we all [00:50:01] that we are holy thine.

Lord, we are thine.

Thine as we are all.

Thine all divine as brands then from the burning torn we all that we are holy divine.

Thou hast our sinful