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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTIST

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 20 August 1922

1 JOHN 4 v 13

"Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He
in us because He hath given us of his Spirit"

If we believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and if we believe that the Scripture does tell us what true religion is, we shall believe this also, namely that it is not a piece of plastic clay to be fitted into everybody's disposition and belief, but that it is a marvellous mould, as Paul speaks in the Romans, a mould into which the people of God are, as molten metal, run. "God be thanked" says he, in that place, "that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which" - as the marginal reading is - "ye were delivered." And if that be true - I believe it is - then it behoves us who are exercised toward God and about eternity, to seriously and carefully and prayerfully look into our own cases and see if we have a religion, not that suits us, but that saves us; not that suits our disposition, allows our heresies and errors, allows inconsistencies, but rather comes as the Spirit of life, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of godliness, so as to deliver us from evil works and make us live; enables us to live to the praise and glory of God's sovereign grace. The Lord has not left His people at an uncertainty as to what is truth and what is vital religion. They may be at a powerful uncertainty, and often are, as to their own interest, but what constitutes religion, what is necessary to present a sinner before God without spot and blameless, necessary to a godly walk, necessary to hold fast the form of sound words, they are at a point; they know. This chapter is remarkable, among other parts of the Scripture and in this Epistle, for its contention for the spirit of love, love to God and brotherly love, but it is not, therefore, a weak Epistle. People may often quote this Epistle, or rather its author, and speak of him as the Apostle of love, and it is quite true; he was full of love; but you cannot read his Epistles with even ordinary care and intelligence apart from grace, and not observe the extraordinary strictness, the

inflexibility of the truth, the inflexibility of John in and for the truth. He will have nothing but the truth and the truth as centred in the Person of Christ, and as that, that the truth has as centred in the real Manhood of Christ. Take notice of this and see if you believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; if, in your heart, you can make that confession, for "whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." John exhorts the saints in this chapter to try the spirits whether they are of God or not, and he gives a standard, testing. Things are not left at a grievous uncertainty. The standard is the Person of Christ, the coming - that is the incarnation - of Christ. He then declares the love of God in its greatest manifestation, in its highest glory, namely in His sending of His beloved Son, His Own Son, the Son of Himself by eternal generation; sending Him that we might live through Him; sending Him to be the propitiation for our sins. And thence he draws a lesson - "If God so loved us we ought also to love one another". O saints of God, look at this, and when your brother or sister may say a word or do a thing that offends you, mark this, love is of God, and if God loved sinners what ought sinners to do but to love one another as they are called. And if God has been pleased to bear with us in all the inconsistencies of our hearts and lives, how ought we to bear one with another when anything comes that is not pleasing and that may be a real offence in the sight of God. Take heed to your spirits. If you say you love God and hate your brother, the Apostle, this loving Apostle says, you are a liar. "If a man say I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." "No man hath seen God at any time." He is invisible to our eye, He is incomprehensible to our mind. He is invisible, the eternal God. "If we love one another God dwelleth in us". What a wonderful thing "And hereby" - as the text has it - "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us". And this is the test, the evidence, the proof of it that "He hath given us of His Spirit". This mutual indwelling is then evidenced by the gift of the Holy Ghost - "Because He has given us of His Spirit". So if I may be helped this evening to speak to you for a little time this must be the one subject, the Holy Ghost as given to the saints. The Holy Ghost, as we believe and hold, is, according to Scripture, a Person in the Godhead. "He" and "I" constantly we have applied to Him in the Word of God. "He shall glorify Me". "Separate

Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them". This Person, the Holy Ghost, is spoken of as proceeding from the Father and the Son. "I will send you another Comforter". He shall speak of Me, He shall glorify Me. He is not known by the world, but you know Him for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you. And the manner of His working in the saints is set forth by Christ. "He shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life." So if the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in us we have then to look at some of His operations. He is an operative Spirit, a teacher, a guide, an anointer; He is the leader of His people.

Now in the first place, if the Spirit of God has been given to us, He has been in us, and is in us, first of all, as the Spirit of conviction of sin. I do not mean this with respect simply and only to the first work, the beginning; it is not to be restricted to that time. The work of conviction is a continuing work, carried on by this divine Spirit who takes up His abode in such unworthy hearts. Not your sins of unregeneration will be your chief sorrow now, not what you did before you knew the Lord, but what you have done since. Whose light made your unkindness to Christ so appear to you as black, the blackest of your sins? Whose teaching has made you believe that your unbelief is a terrible sin?; not the unbroken unbelief of unregeneracy, but the unbelief that makes faith little, comparatively, and weak. "O thou of little faith wherefore didst thou doubt?" Not the wandering away from God peculiar to all men, living and reigning in all men, but the backsliding to which you are bent. Not the unbroken enmity, but the enmity that shows itself in fretting, murmuring, rebelling. Whose light, I say, is it that shows these sins in their true colours and makes them appear to be what they really are, amongst your chief sins? Is it not the light of the Spirit? Is it not His teaching? How good of Him it is to convince sinners of their sins. We should soon grow hard if He left us. We need that exhortation and to have it brought home to us. "Take heed lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin". "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God". What makes us depart from Him so; what causes us to have that inveterate tendency to wander from the Lord, but the fallen nature that we have, the continual motion of sin toward hell, and who but the Spirit indwelling and teaching can keep us from

taking those terrible steps which are dictated to us in our fallen nature. Hereby you may know God has not forgotten you if His Spirit convinces you daily. Hereby you may know that the Lord's eye is on you for good if His Spirit tells you when you are going wrong and checks you. Hereby you may know you have a place in God's heart and care and view and providence and grace, if His good Spirit comes and checks you and tells you what is wrong, warns you against indulging it; brings you to your knees in humble confession of the sins you have and that you would commit if He prevent not. O what a great thing it is to have conviction of sin. And I would say to you, do not try to smother conviction; do not try to trample on the checks that come into your hearts; they are the kindness of the Holy Spirit to you; they are the kindness of God; they will make you sober, tender. They will cause the fear of God to be strong in your heart and make you wish each in your spirit to say with Nehemiah - "So did not I because of the fear of God". My friends, I have more than once said to you during the years I have been with you, you will not go to heaven ignorant of the hell you deserve and of the hell of sin that is in your nature. Over and again you will find it to be as, in quite a different case, what the Lord said to Ezekiel. "Son of man, dig deeper." And when you get into this room and see behind the door men in secret worshipping the sun and get still deeper and deeper into the place you will find secret things which, in unregeneracy, you never thought about; which, in the beginning of God's gracious work with you, you had no conception of as being in you. Words you never uttered may spring up to your lips, thoughts you shudder at may come in and even claim some indulgence. And who is it that makes you know that these things are offensive, more offensive if indulged, than any of the sins of unregeneracy. Who is it that sets them before you in that beautiful light that shows them in their terrible deformity and malignity? "Hereby know we that we dwell in God" - sinful though we are; that we dwell in Him by possessing His life - "and He dwells in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

And secondly we may know, according to this Scripture, that God dwells in us and we dwell in God by having the Spirit as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making us free from the law of sin and death. A law reigns as long as it is a living law and has, or should have, authority, commanding and receiving obedience. Now we all were

under the law of sin and death, but if the Holy Ghost has been given to us we are, by Him, made free from that law, and are under the law of Christ, under the blessed, the everlasting gospel. This deliverance from the law of sin and death does not mean a deliverance in this life from the being of sin. It is not God's will that we should be delivered from the being of sin, but do mark this, it is one thing to have the being of sin and find it to be a grief to you to have it, and another thing to live in sin. He who lives in sin continually has no Spirit of Christ. If you live in sin you are dead in it, and are a stranger to God and His grace. If you live in sin I say you are under the curse and have not a shadow of a ground for hope that you are going to heaven; No. But if the Spirit of Christ is in you as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, then though sin will struggle it will not reign. "The flesh" says the Apostle Paul "lusteth against the Spirit" - struggles, desires, against the Spirit - "and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would". And yet you may be like a person pulled at the same time in two opposite directions, and may have set before you two distinct paths, and you may say I want both of them, I want to walk in them both. My old man says give me to walk here in sin, this sin, that sin, and the other says give me to walk in the fear of God, to walk up and down in the Name of the Lord Jesus; to walk in the atonement, to live in His righteousness, to be led by His Spirit, to feel the power of truth, and the love of God, and the righteousness of Christ made known to me, made my own. The child of God is a mystery to himself sometimes. He is moved and drawn and enticed and led in such different ways and his exercises are so strange. There is some darling thing in his heart and he says it is hard to give this up, hard to leave this. And then the Spirit shows him the straight gate and the narrow way and shows him that this thing cannot go through the needle's eye, that this darling lust must be parted with, and nature says it is hard and frets. And grace says in the heart O but Jesus Christ is glorious, and a place in His heart, in His love, a taste of His goodness, a sense of His favour, why these are better than the whole world of sin, better than the indulgence of every lust that you may have in your heart. The end of this would be death, but this goodness of God in Christ is eternal life. So now that Scripture becomes true - "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Not free from

the being of sin, but from the law of it. It can no longer command; it entices but does not command. It draws but does not reign. It clamours for indulgence but it is forbidden. O what a mercy it is to have the Spirit of Christ in you. "God hath given us" said John "of His Spirit". "And hereby we know that we are in God and God in us"; in a different state altogether from that in which we were born.

And this law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus exhibits itself, so to speak, in its various operations. As you read in that chapter in the Romans - "They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit"; they care for them. The things of the Spirit in that place, as you may find through the chapter, are the things of God. Christ and His things; Christ in His Person, Christ in His death, Christ in His righteousness, Christ in His intercession. These are the things of the Spirit and these make for peace. Says the Apostle, you mind them. If you are in the Spirit, if the Holy Ghost dwells in you, you take notice of these things; you say my interests lie there, my hope is there, and my safe passage through the storms of this life lies there, and heaven at the end is there. And to mind these things is to pray about them, to ask God to give you them, and to give you a sense of their power and a sight of their beauty, and a reception of them into your heart is the food of faith, and is the delight of your very soul. Well now, that is a great thing is it not? O to have the Holy Spirit in you, to show you the greatness of Christ's fountain, a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; opened for you a poor, foul sinner who daily begets some defilement, some cause of separation. The greatness of this can never be exaggerated. Infinite in its virtue, infinite in the pleasure it gives to the Father, in the purity it bestows upon sinners, in the efficacy of it in their consciences, in the power of it to bring them honourably to their graves and to land them in glory without spot. And the Spirit sets this before faith and faith says I see what that blood can do, and I long that it may do it in me. And how wonderful it is when the Spirit shows that beauteous robe of righteousness without a thread of human works, without a shape or any kind of shape by human contrivance; only and alone the righteousness of Christ, wrought out by Him, brought in by Him when He led captivity captive and received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. And how wonderful when the Holy Ghost glorifies the

resurrection and the ascension into heaven and the intercession there of the Lord Jesus, the conqueror, the great victor over every enemy that the child of God has and can possibly have; the Lord who caused death to die and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. Jesus is the death of death. Jesus is the law of life and peace, and He is seen by faith just insofar as the Holy Spirit manifests Him. Is He thy teacher, O sinner, and dost thou see this blessed One, Jesus Christ the friend of sinners, the intercessor for the dumb, the advocate for the guilty. "Hereby know we that we dwell in God and God in us because He hath given us of His Spirit".

The Spirit of God is spoken of as being given as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and mark this difference - if you are under the teaching of the Spirit you will be sure to mark it one day, namely the difference between you perceiving intellectually something of Christ and receiving by faith a God-given view of Christ. The former may make you proud; the latter will put you in the dust. The former will make you an empty sound if you speak, a tinkling cymbal; the latter will fill you with knowledge and love. The Spirit of wisdom, whereby you will see a way opened and cast up and lined with blood and guarded by promises and precepts; a way to heaven from hell. Infinite wisdom devised it; almighty power effected it in the Person and death of Christ and the Spirit puts the trembling, weak feet of His children into this path, the path of life. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the Spirit of power. The Spirit of power whereby in prayer the soul gets hold of God. The Spirit of power whereby sometimes the sinner says "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me". Sometimes the Spirit of grace and supplications in a peculiar matter, whereby you cannot let the Lord alone. One may say, well I will make this a matter of prayer. He may think of the matter and forget prayer. At another time he may have something to trouble him and find that he is carried away, carried by the Holy Spirit on wings of love and inward intercession, to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and he deals there with it, and there he gets the ear of God and knows it. There he gets a sight of the Intercessor and loves Him, and there hope is born in his heart that God, hearing, will answer and deliver; and there he finds himself resting, not on this means or others, not on this scheme or that, but on omnipotence and love in Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost in the Scripture is spoken of as

shedding abroad the love of God in the heart. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God". And says Paul Not only so, but we have this great thing "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us". My friends this is one of the family secrets, this is one of the most remarkable and beautiful and wonderful experiences that can come to a regenerated person in this world. How it comes you may not know. As one says, I do not know by what sense? the Lord comes, but it is, when He comes, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil. So when the love of God comes, it comes sweetly, prevailingly, sweeping before it all the objections of unworthiness felt, and all guilt mourned, and all sin which has been a snare; it comes sweeping away all these objections and the sinner just finds himself with the love of God in his heart. The swelling, the repentance, the contrition, the sweet dependence, the divine happiness, the holy comfort of love he cannot express. He says my heart was enlarged when I found this love within me and my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour who had regarded my low estate. I felt now secure in His arms, embraced by His mercy, and washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. I felt happy beyond all expression. And some of you may say, well but that is beyond us. Well, never pretend to it till you get it. Is it beyond you? It is not beyond God's mercy to give it you. It is not beyond the Spirit's gracious power to shed it abroad in your heart. Blessed be God, it is no part of the gospel that a sinner shall climb up to heaven to get this. This is the gospel, that the Holy Ghost sheds abroad this love in the heart, and if He does it then you are a receiver, a passive receiver. Not passive when you have received, but passive in the reception of this. You receive it just as a vessel receives what is poured into it. How winning? it is, how wonder fills the mind when it comes; what a song is sung. "Why me, O blessed God". "On such love my soul still ponder".

High beyond imagination
Is the love of God to man
Far too deep for human reason
Fathom that it never can

This is one secret blessed evidence, Scripture evidence, that the Holy Ghost is given, when the love of God is shed abroad in the

heart.

And now another operation of the Spirit is this, that he strengthens with all might in the inner man afflicted saints. Says Paul to the Colossians - "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering ..." (Colossians 1 v 11), and you will find that being strengthened with all might to be inside Paul's word to the Ephesians - "Put on the whole armour of God". The armour of righteousness, the armour of light, take on you, and put on the helmet of salvation and the breastplate of righteousness, and having in your hand the sword of the Spirit, and thus in the evil day withstand, and having done all, stand. O what vigour He gives to faith some moments, when you can say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What strength to faith it is that you receive when you can say in trouble - Is this the way? Lord lead me on, nor leave me till I say, Father Thy will be done. What strength it is in your spirit when you can take up the cross and follow the Lord and feel that however much flesh and blood may suffer this is the right way. The way of Christ was through tribulation, and the way of His followers must also be through tribulation. The Spirit strengthens with all might, all the might that is necessary. While enabled you resist sin and submit to God, take up your cross, deny self, and follow Christ. What a wonder it is to have heavenly power in your weak soul, even the power of the Holy Ghost. When you see that power working in others you may say you wish you also might be favoured with it. When you really need it, when, unless you have it you would be destroyed, then you will find it. Strengthened. Some passage will come in and be a very strength of God.

He is also in the Scripture spoken of as the earnest of the inheritance. An earnest is a part of it, though a small part of the inheritance, and when the Holy Ghost gives you somewhat of Jesus Christ, a little experience of His righteousness, of His cleansing blood, of fellowship with Him; when you receive Christ into your heart in some way and measure, then therein you have an earnest. It may be now very little, but it says, more will come; it gave you a heavenly feeling and that was an earnest of heaven. It gave you some sense of God's goodness, and that was an earnest of the everlasting

goodness of God that you are to inherit and enjoy. It gave you a little sense of communion, and that was an earnest of the endless communion to which you are predestinated, and must come in time by God's power and love. When you have a promise of God given out from His very heart and coming into your heart that is an earnest for the Spirit takes the word and seals it, puts it there with gracious power.

Also the Holy Ghost is given for consolation and for fellowship. If there be any consolation of love, if there be any fellowship of the Spirit. We never can properly express the greatness of God's grace in the gift of the Spirit with regard to fellowship. To partake of His light and His life and His power and His love, to partake of His unction, this is fellowship with Him.

And lastly here this evening, it is in the Scripture stated that the saints after they believe are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. By the Holy Spirit of promise we are to understand that Spirit who was shed on the Church, the first Church, after the resurrection and ascension into heaven of Christ. He, that risen and exalted One, then shed on the Apostles the promise of the Spirit, which promise He received from His Father. And, says the Apostle, you who are believers, after you have believed are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. There may be some believers here, and doubtless are, who have not yet received that Holy Spirit's sealing, and because you have not received it you may be tempted, tempted about your state and standing before the Lord. Let me say one word here, although the Holy Ghost does seal the saints heirs of heaven, it is not distinctly revealed, as far as I recollect reading about this part of His work, when, or how soon, or how long after believing, this blessing is given, but it must be given. "Whereby ye are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise". I think the Church had it of old when this is said of her - "A garden inclosed is My sister, my spouse" - now that is true of all the Church - "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" - when the Lord in the same singular visitation and operation comes unto a sinner and shuts him up to Himself and seals him, putting His Own divine seal upon him, so that sinner says, I am the Lord's, and says to his Lord - "Let my beloved come into His garden", and the Lord comes and says - Come with Me; let us lodge in the villages, let

us go into the fields, and there I will give thee My loves. And it is that sealing of the Spirit, more than perhaps any other operation of the Spirit, that makes a sinner say, "I am sick of love". You may be sick of waiting for it, for "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick", but that is not that sickness. But when you get so much of God into your soul and then you say I want more and can scarcely bear to be absent from the Lord. But this is an uncommon experience today, alas for us. But now, if we have these, yea if you have the first, more shall come, much more. If you have these operations of the Spirit who dwells in you, then you have this blessed evidence set forth by John; ye prove that you dwell in God and God dwells in you. May it please the Lord to clear this matter up for us, scatter our doubts, remove our fears, and comfortably assure us that we are His, bought with a price, and so say to us - "Therefore glorify God in your body and spirit which are His."

AMEN.