

The Divine Indwelling

1 John 4:14-5:5

Pastor John Miller

This morning I want to answer a question. That question is, what is a Christian? Have you ever wondered where the rubber really meets the road? What is a Christian? Is a Christian someone that is born in America? A Christian someone that has been baptized? Or a Christian that's someone that believes in Jesus? A Christian someone that goes to church or whatever it might be, we have all these different ideas about what a Christian is.

I think the best place to look is to know what a Christian is, is in the Bible. Amen?

Yes.

Amen.

And I think John makes it very clear that a Christian is a person who has God dwelling in them. Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and I knock. If you hear my voice and open that door, I will come in and I will have fellowship with you."

A Christian is a person that's opened the door of their heart or their life and they've invited by faith, Jesus Christ to come into their life. They've seen themselves as a sinner. They know Jesus died on the cross for their sins, and they trust him to save them and forgive them. And the spirit of God comes to dwell or abide in you.

So Christian is indwelt by God. But the question is, what are the evidences that you are indwelt by God? In our series, the title is, Life That Is Real because a Christian is a person in the life of God, in their soul. That's a Christian. God dwelling in you the hope of glory.

But let me tell you this, if God is in your life, you'll know it. If God is in your life, it will be manifested by the things you believe, the things you say and how you behave. So we're looking at the birthmarks of the believer. And John, in this passage, is going to take the birthmark of righteousness, love, and truth. And in a beautiful tapestry, he's going to weave them all together in this marvelous text.

And I see in this text, four indications that God is dwelling in a person's life. And if you're taking notes, I encourage you to write them down. Number one, if God is dwelling in you, what is the evidence of divine indwelling? We confess his person. We confess his person. We believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, is God manifested in the flesh who died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day.

Now I want you to follow with me in verse 14 of chapter four. John says, "And we have seen and we do testify that the Father sent the son to be the savior of the world. Now, whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God dwells in him and he in God." So the confession that

Jesus is the Son of God is evidence of God dwelling in us.

Now, I want you to notice first of all in verse 14 that the apostolic faith was based upon a firsthand experience and information. Go back with me to verse 14. John says, "We." That is we as believers and we as apostles, we as true Christians. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the son to be the savior of the world." Notice the phrase there in verse 14, "We have seen and we testify." The apostles had a personal encounter with God in the flesh. "That which we have seen, that which we have heard, that which our hands have handled," said he in chapter one, "the word of life declare we unto you." So John says, "We apostles are communicating that which we have experienced."

Now, I believe that we as Christians today can say the same thing. I've heard God, I have experienced God. What is a Christian? A Christian's a person that knows God personally. You don't just know about God, you don't just have information about who he is, you actually know God. You walk with him, he talks with you. You are a child of God, you have a relationship with God. And that's really what a Christian is. He is a Christian because he has a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So it's in the personal experience realm.

"We testify, we have seen." And by the way, in the Greek, it's in what's called the perfect tense. That means we saw in the past, we experienced in the present and it lingers on into the future. I don't know if you've noticed many times when I pray at the opening of my sermon, I ask God to speak through what he has spoken. "God, I ask you to speak through what you've spoken."

I'm referring to the idea that the Bible is God's word. He spoke it into existence in the past. But guess what? When we read God's word, God is speaking right here, right now. Amen?

Amen.

And the reality is when you come on Sunday and we open our Bibles, this is why I want you to bring a Bible and open your Bibles and we read the scriptures. God is speaking. We are hearing God speak. And that's why the word of God is so powerful. We can experience God through his word as he speaks through what he has spoken. Now, I want you to know the content of what God has spoken in verse 14, marvelous at the end of that verse. "That the Father sent the son," to be what? The savior of what? The Father sent the son to be the savior of the world. That's the whole Bible in half a verse. I would write in the margin right there, can you dig it?

The whole Bible in half a verse. John 3:16 is the whole Bible in one verse. "For God so of the world, he gave his only be God and son. Whoever believes in him would never perish, but have ever lasting life." Here's half a verse. Father sent the son to be the savior of the world. He didn't come just to teach the world. He didn't come just to show the world. He actually came to save the world. When Jesus was born, the angels told the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, "For unto you as born this day in the city of David, a," what? A savior. Music to my ears.

I'm so glad those angels didn't say, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a politician." Whoopy-D. What good is that going to do us? A military leader, a philosopher, a

psychologist. Oh, we're all saved. The world is lost and we need a savior, and Jesus Christ is the savior of the world and I praise God for that. And that's why he came.

And this morning as we pass these elements and you hold that bread and you drink that cup, don't forget that it's a symbol of the body of Jesus and the blood of Jesus and that's why he came to die for our sins and to save this lost world. That's what it's all about. Now, we not only experience, as the apostles did, but we also proclaim, as the apostles did. I proclaim the same message Peter, James and John preached. You proclaim the same message that God sent his son to be the savior of the world. And that's what we go out of here and proclaim into the highways and the byways, work, neighborhood, school. Wherever you go, you let them know God loves you. God sent his son to be the savior of the world.

Then notice verse 15, John then draws a conclusion to these statements. He says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God." Now what he means by that is that Jesus is God in the flesh. In this epistle whenever John says, "You confess that Jesus is the Messiah or he's the Christ or he's the son of God," what he means by that is that you hold to the doctrine of Christ, that you hold to the deity of Christ and his humanity and that it's one person, Jesus the Savior. And that's what a Christian believes, that Jesus is the son of God.

In Romans chapter 10:9-10, Paul says, "If thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Then I want you to notice in verse 15, this double indwelling, in verse 15. He says, "That God dwells in him. Whoever confesses Jesus is the son of God, God dwells in him." That's a Christian. "And he," the Christian, "in God." Now, I probably took more time for service with this than I should have, but I want to mention this again. This double indwelling is a very important doctrinal, theological and practical truth. And it breaks down like this.

We are as Christians in Christ. We are declared righteous in Christ. Christ is in us to make us righteous. Now, I want you to get that distinction. I am in Christ declared righteous, not made righteous, declared righteous. Christ is in me to make me righteous. There is a ton of important biblical truth in those two concepts. The moment you were born again, you were taken out of Adam and you were placed in Christ. When you were first born, you were born in Adam, sin, death, condemnation, separation from God. When you were born again of the Holy Spirit and God began to dwell in you and you became a Christian, Christ came in you and you were also placed in Christ at that moment.

Romans 8:1, "There's now therefore no," what? Condemnation. "Condemnation to those who are," what? In Christ Jesus.

"In Christ Jesus," period. That, by the way, is where that verse should end. Some translations have, "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." That doesn't appear until verse four of chapter eight. "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Now who are they who are in Christ Jesus? Everyone that is a Christian. Every Christian is in Christ. So

guess what? No condemnation. Isn't that good news.?

Amen.

Now we condemn ourselves because we don't perform, we don't live the way we should. But the problem is we get those two distinctions. I'm in Christ, Christ is in me mixed up. When we don't perform properly or we're not living a good Christian life, we feel condemned or we feel unforgiven or we feel that God doesn't love us and we forget that I am positionally in Christ and that doesn't change and there's no condemnation.

But the goal of the Christian life is to bring my practice, Christ in me, up to my position. Christ is in me to make me righteous. I am in Christ declared righteous. And I need to remember my position in Christ and that Christ is in me to give me the power to live the Christian life.

So the first mark of a true Christian is the confession that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Here's the second mark, verse 16 to chapter five, verse one. We manifest his love. Now, this is not the first time John has talked about love in the believer's life, so we won't dwell on it too long. But in this long section, he weaves the idea of living righteously, believing and practicing love. Follow with me as we read this text beginning in verse 16 of John 4. "And we have known," John says, "and we have believed not everyone who knows believes. The love that God has to us, God is love." This is the second time John is told us that God is to his nature and character's love.

"And he that dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect or complete that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. Now, there's no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear because fear has torment." Because he says, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him," why? "Because he first loved us. And if a man say, 'I love God,' but he hates his brother, he is a liar for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him that he who loveth God loves his brother also."

Chapter five verse one. "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And everyone that loves him, that begat," that is God, "loves him also that is begotten of Him that is God." Now let me break this down for you and unpackage it.

Number one, we know God loves us, verse 16. And I love the New Living Translation. It says, "We know how much God loves us and we have put our trust in him and his love." One of the most important things for you as a Christian is to not only know... Notice, he says, "We know and we believe." It's one thing to know, it's another thing to believe. How many of you know God loves you? Raise your hand. Okay, how many of you believe God loves you? And many times if you're honest with yourself, "Oh, I know God loves me, but I don't really believe it. I don't really live like that."

You know it'll change your life if you really believe that God loves you and that God is in control, that God is in control of your life and that nothing can happen to you, but what God does allow? What a marvelous truth that is. Rest in his love. Know he loves you and then believe it. Live your

life in light of the love of God.

Now, John reports or repeats the profound statement, verse 16, God is love. And from this statement that God is love is to his nature and character, he draws the conclusion that he that abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. Now, love is the evidence of God dwelling in us. And then he says, verse 17, "Herein is our love made perfect." What does that mean? It means that God's love is not that we live a perfect life, but that it is complete, that it's filled our lives.

The word perfect means complete or mature or fully right. So God's love is just manifested in our lives. It's fully developed. And two things happen. Verse 17, when God's love is manifested in our life, we have boldness in the day of judgment. Notice that there in verse 17, "Herein is our love made perfect or complete that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world." Now, I believe this day of judgment is the [inaudible 00:17:11] or the reward seed of Christ when we'll stand before Christ and we as Christians will give an account of our life. Now we're not going to be judged for our sins. Those were dealt with on the cross when Jesus died for us.

But God is going to give us kind of a reckoning day for our time, our talent and our treasure, what we did with our lives. "I gave you this gift. Did you use it? I gave you this time. Did you use it? I gave you these opportunities. Did you bury them in a napkin in the ground or did you use the abilities that God have given you for the glory of God and for the good of others?" Now, when I know that God loves me and I am manifesting his love by the way I live, I don't have to worry about that reckoning day.

I don't believe Christians are going to be judged for their sins, but I do believe that we'll be judged for our service. And one day our goal in life should be to hear the Lord say to each one of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And I believe with all my heart that that job that you do well could be just raising children. It could be that God has called you to raise a godly generation. It could be that God called you to pray. It could be that God entrusted you with money to give. It could be that God gave you a talent that you use for his glory and you're going to hear those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou unto the joy of the Lord." So it's just doing faithfully what God has entrusted to you. It's not having some super ability. It's being faithful to the gifts and abilities God has given to you. So we don't have to be afraid.

Our love is matured, it's perfect, and we don't have to fear on the day of judgment. But notice the boldness on the day of judgment is broken down. The positive statement is in verse 17, and the negative statement is in verse 18. He says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear because fear has in itself its own torment, its own punishment. He that fears is not walking in love, is not mature in love, is not really believing that God actually loves him." And then notice also verse 19, he says, "For we love him," why? You can speak. I won't get mad at you. You're like...

Because he first-

Loved us.

Loved us. Good job. Now, just a little footnote for you Bible scholars, some translations have because our oldest manuscripts omit the word him. It would read, "We love because he first loved us." So it could be that he's not talking about the object of our love. He's talking about the fact that we just love. You know why we love? Because God first loved us. Now both are true. We do love him because he first loved us.

And I want you to think for just a moment, when did God love you? When you were lost, when you were a sinner, when you were in rebellion from God, when you were running from God, many of you when you hated God, when you were doing things that were unlovely, right? You don't want to admit that though, right? When we were living in a state of rebellion toward God, God still loved you. You know what that means? That means that God's love is unconditional.

We love people if they're nice. We love people if they look nice. We love people if they like what we like and we get along together and you're not mean to me, then I'll love you. We have conditional love. God's agape, and it is the word agape or agape love, is unconditional. So you as a Christian, love people even when they don't deserve it. Amazing.

Even if someone doesn't deserve your love, you still love them. I'm not sure there's many of you that can think right now somebody that you feel is undeserving of your love, but God loved you when you were undeserving of his love and we're still undeserving of his love. God's love is unconditional. God's love is un-influenceable. You can't make God love you more. You can't make God love you less. God loves you. So stop trying to perform to get God's love. He just loves you, just accept that.

And because he loves you, you ought to love him and you ought to love others. And in the context of 1 John, you ought to live in obedience and righteousness. So this loving others is interesting. Notice verse 19, "We love him because he first loved us." And then in verse 20, we have here the matter of logic. And this is amazing to me. John says, "If we say we love God, but we hate our brother, you're a liar." John's epistle is not politically correct.

John didn't practice PC here, political correctness. If you say, "I love God, but I hate that guy right over there." And you come to church, "I love you, Lord. I love you Lord, but I hate my wife. I love you God. I love you God. But I sure hate my wife, my husband right now. That guy's just really making me so mad. My boss or my brother or sister. Oh, I love you God, but I hate that guy, but I love you God." What's with that? You're a liar. I didn't say it, John did.

John says, "You can't say I love God, then hate your brother." And notice what he goes on to say. He says, "For he that loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God who he's not seen?" Now this is interesting. I would turn it around. I would say, "It's easy to love God, he's lovable. And it's easy to love God because you don't ever see him do weird things. I mean you don't see him, but it's hard to love people that you see because they're messed up."

John turns it around. He's actually saying it's easier to love somebody you can see. It's easier to love someone that you can touch. It's easier to love a person than it is to love God. And so if you cannot love a person or people, then how are you going to do the harder thing, and that is to love God? And John's showing us how these are all linked together. And then notice in verse 21, it's a matter of obedience. "And this commandment have we from him that he who loves God, loves his brother also." End of debate. It's a commandment. God commands us to love. And then in chapter five, verse one, I love it. It's a matter of relationship. Notice it in verse one of chapter five. "For whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ," which means that you believe he's God incarnate, "is born of God."

Notice the phrase, born of God. So he's talking about evidence that we are true Christians. You believe that Jesus is the Messiah, not that Jesus had the Christ upon him. He was just a man on whom the Christ came, as Gnostics taught, and as modern Christian science teaches, but that the man Jesus is God in the flesh. "Everyone that loves that, loves him, that begot, loveth him also that is begotten of him." So a fancy way of saying at the end of verse one, that if you believe that and you're born of God, you're going to love God. He's the one that begat us, and you're going to love those who have begotten of him. That means you love the family of God. So let me put it real, real simple for you.

If you're a Christian, you love other Christians, you love other Christians. It doesn't mean you approve of everything they do, but you love them. And he likens it unto a family. You and I, as true Christians, are actually brothers and sisters in the family of God. We have the same father in heaven, we've been born into the same family, so we have to love each other.

One of the things that my wife and I are so blessed in that our children, we have four children, three girls and a boy, is they all love each other. That is such a blessing. I mean, they pray for each other, they encourage each other, they hang out together. They don't even invite my wife and I sometimes. "You guys are going where? You guys are doing what? Why didn't you invite us?" And it is just awesome to see your kids get along, right? Nothing can break the heart of a parent more than to see their children fighting among themselves.

Do you think God is any different? We are brothers and sisters. God is our father. Let's love each other. Let's get along together. Let's pray for each other. Let's support each other. Let's encourage each other. Let's believe the best in each other. Let's not be quick to be critical and judgmental and fault-finding. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "Judge not lest you be judged. For how is it you can look at somebody who has a little sliver in their eye and say, 'Let me help you take the sliver out of your eye,' and you got a four by four hanging out of yours? You hypocrite."

First take the board out of your own eye. Then you can see clearly to get the sliver out of your brother's eye. How many times Christians walk into church and they got a board coming out of their eye like bang, bang, bang? They're knocking people over. "Oh, let me help you here, brother." Bang, hit them in the head. "Cast out the beam from thine own eye, then you can see clearly to help your brother."

But at the end of verse one there, what he's actually saying is that if we're born of God, we love him who begot us and we love others who are begotten as well. We keep his commandments, is the third mark of the Christian. So number one, we believe. Number two, we manifest love. And number three, write this down, we keep his commandments. I want you to see this in chapter five, verses two and three.

"By this we know that we love the children of God even as we love God and we keep his commandments." Verse three, "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome or grievous or heavy," is a better translation. So love God, keep his commandments, and his commandments, verse three, are not grievous. The word means heavy or burdensome.

What it means is not that it's not hard to love others, it's difficult sometimes to love people. And some of you are sitting here right now and going, "Man, this 1 John series, it's just hammering me. There's so many people that I just don't like. I'm going to wait until John gets through this book and then I'm going to come to church. I don't like these verses. Could you skip them?" And it becomes difficult. It's challenging. But if you... Listen carefully, here's the point in this text. If you've been born of God and you are really a Christian, God who is love dwells in you, the God who is love dwells in you. So you love God who begat you and you love others who are part of the family of God. You get along with other Christians, you love other Christians.

But it's not a burden. It's not a weight. His commandments are not burden. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." The other day we were talking about... My wife and I and some of the kids were talking about how a mother of a baby doesn't find burdensome to feed her own child. A mother of a young baby doesn't find burdensome to care for her own child. Challenging? Yes. Sometimes difficult, but not a burden because they love that child. It's not a burden to change a diaper, right? All the women go, "Amen."

If you love your child, you're going to take a little stinky once in a while, a little mess. Even dads can get in there and change the diapers. Amen, ladies?

Yes.

If you really love the child, you're going to want to care for that child. And if you really love, then it's not a burden. When the commandment is to love your brother, "Okay, if I have to. Man, hate that commandment." If you've really been born of God, you'll love God and you're going to love your brother also. But here's the fourth and last mark of a true child of God.

It's in chapter five, verse four and five. And that is we overcome by faith. We overcome by faith. So we confess his person, we manifest his love, we keep his commandments and we overcome by faith. Notice verse four, "For whosoever whatsoever is born of God, God have overcome the world. For whosoever is born of God, excuse me, overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world even our," what?

Faith.

Faith. "Who is he that overcomes the world, but that believes that Jesus is the son of God." Isn't that awesome? So we confess his person, we manifest his love, we keep his commandments and we overcome by faith. Every child of God is an overcomer.

Now that may sound like a simple statement, but it's simply profound. Every Christian, every child of God is in Christ. And in Christ, there's no condemnation. And every Christian, every child of God is a over comer. Being an over comer is being a Christian. And being a Christian is overcoming. And I believe that every Christian is an over comer, not because of your performance, not because you're some wonderful person, but because you are in Christ Jesus. And you got there by the work of God's grace. And you got there by the work of God's spirit.

The moment you trusted Jesus Christ who died on the cross to forgive you and to save you from sin and he came to dwell in your heart, you were placed in Christ and you have become an over comer. An over comer is not something you do, it's something that you are.

By the way, the word verse five, overcometh is a Greek word, nikao. We got our word Nike from it. It was a Greek God of victory. And Paul said in Romans 8:37, "In all things, we are more than conquerors through him that loves us." And how do we overcome? By believing that Jesus is the Christ. Verse five, he says it once again. "By believing that Jesus is the son of God. By believing," verse five, "that Jesus is God in the flesh." So the object of our faith is Jesus Christ. I love that song, On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand, all other ground is what?

Sinking sand.

Sinking sand. When all around my soul gives away, he still is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all of the ground is sinking sand.

If you're a child of God and you are confessing his person, manifesting his love, keeping his commandments, you over come by faith. And the object of your faith is Jesus who died and Jesus who rose. So when we break this bread and we drink this cup and we ask you to hold your portion until we're all served, the bread is a symbol of the body of Jesus Christ. The cup is a symbol of the blood of Jesus Christ. And Jesus said this in John 16, he said, "In the world, you shall have tribulation." We all know that's true, right?

Yes.

But then he went on to say, "but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world." So in the world there is tribulation, but in Christ we have become over comers. Amen?

Amen.

Let's pray together.