

148. The Gospel of John—15:1-11

“The Vine and the Branches” Part 9

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(7/4/21)

Find this weeks’ sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

John 15:1-8 (NKJV)

¹ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The core principle of this entire passage on bearing fruit in the Christian life is that of ‘**abiding in Christ**’—that is the heart of this passage and the secret to everything in the Christian life.

As we said last week, ‘*abiding in Christ*’ is all about love—a deep love relationship with Jesus.

It is not first and foremost spiritual disciplines as important as they are—it’s about our love for Him.

When we are in love with Jesus—we will want to read His Word, talk to Him in prayer, go to church and tell others about Him—but our love for Him has to be the *motivation* or else He rejects these things as empty spiritual activities and disciplines. (Revelation 2:2-5)

The activities, responsibilities and disciplines of the Christian life don’t result *in* abiding they result *from* abiding—they are a *fruit* of our love relationship with Jesus:

John 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

The Christian life is a very simple thing—it’s all about loving Jesus—making Him our first love and allowing everything in our lives to revolve around Him.

One pastor had this to say on the subject—

“It’s about loving Jesus *totally*, loving Him *sacrificially*, loving Him *obediently*, loving Him *worshipfully*, loving Him with our *service*—it’s all about loving Jesus—that’s what it means to be a Christian.”

Modern Christianity has all but lost this perspective.

Many Christians today put *themselves* at the center of their Christian experience—it’s all about them—“*How much God loves me. What God should do for me. What God should give to me.*” It’s as if they believe that God’s whole purpose for existing is to bless *their* life and do everything in His power to make *them* happy.

But Jesus said—

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* 'This is the first commandment.

John 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 15:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

One author spoke of the life of Christian missionary David Brainard—

"Every now and then we meet someone or read about someone who has had that close personal relationship with Christ. David Brainard, the missionary to Indians [native Americans] in this country, was such a man. He suffered from what was then called consumption (we know it as tuberculosis). He would travel to the Indians by horseback, and sometimes he would have a convulsion, vomit blood, become unconscious, and fall off his horse. He would lie in the snow, and when that happened, his horse learned to stay right there. When he regained consciousness, he would crawl back onto his horse and be on his way to preach to the Indians. As he went, he would cry out, "Lord Jesus, I've failed You, but You know that I love You." He had that close, intimate relationship with Christ."

This 'abiding love' keeps us in fellowship with Jesus—it keeps everything we do for Him motivated by love and not fear or obligation or even selfish ambition.

I found this about a man who truly served the Lord out of love—who didn't have an easy life:

"Henry Francis Lyte was of delicate health all his life, but that didn't stop him from working like an ox, year after year, pastoring among the seafaring folks around Devonshire, England. But finally, his strength gave out, and in 1847 his doctor suggested he move to the milder climate of southern France. It was a heartbreaking parting, and Lyte couldn't leave without one final sermon to his church of twenty-four years. His health was so frail that his friends advised against it, but Lyte was determined. Standing feebly, he said,

"Oh, brethren, I stand here before you today, as alive from the dead, if I may hope to impress upon you and get you to prepare for that solemn hour which must come to all. I plead with you to become acquainted with the changeless Christ and His death."

After finishing his sermon, he served the Lord's Supper to his weeping flock and dismissed them. That evening, as his life's work drew to its close, he found comfort in pondering John 15: "Abide in Me, and I in you."

According to his gardener, Lyte wrote the following hymn after having walked down to the ocean and watched "the sun setting over Brixham Harbor like a pool of molten gold." Taking out a piece of paper, he wrote a poem and returned to his study to rewrite and polish it before giving it to his adopted daughter.

The next day he left for France. Reaching Nice, he had a seizure and passed away with the words, "Joy! Peace!" on his lips. His poem, however, lived on, becoming one of our most beloved hymns:

*Abide with me—fast falls the eventide!
The darkness deepens—Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!"*

As beautiful as those words are I think they are backwards—the plea to abide is never directed at the **Vine** (the Lord)—but at the **branches** (the Christian). The gentle heartfelt plea from our Savior to His people is always—*“Abide in Me as I abide in you...” (verse 4)*

We don’t need to ask Him to love us or abide (remain) with us—the unfaithfulness in abiding is always our fault never His.

3. The Practice Of Abiding

4. The Principles Of Abiding

a. To enter into an abiding relationship with Jesus I must believe it’s possible through faith.

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV)

⁶ As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord [by faith for salvation], so walk in Him [by faith for daily fellowship]...

Ephesians 3:17-19 (NKJV)

¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Andrew Murray—

“We speak of a man’s home as his abode. Our abode, the home of our soul, is to be the love of Christ. We are to live our life there, to be at home there all the day: this is what Christ means our life to be, and really can make it. Our continuous abiding in the Vine is to be an abiding in His love. You have probably heard or read of what is called the higher, or the deeper life, of the richer or the fuller life, of the life abundant. And you possibly know that some have told of a wonderful change, by which their life of continual failure and stumbling had been changed into a very blessed experience of being kept and strengthened and made exceeding glad. If you asked them how it was this great blessing came to them, many would tell you it was simply this, that they were led to believe that this abiding in Christ’s love was meant to be a reality, and that they were made willing to give up everything for it, and then enabled to trust Christ to make it true to them.”

But we still have some practical part in our abiding in Him—

John 15:4 (NKJV)

⁴ **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

One author—

“Many believers pray and long very earnestly for the filling of the Spirit and the indwelling of Christ, and wonder that they do not make more progress. The reason is often this, the “I in you” cannot come because the “abide in me” is not maintained.”

b. To enter into an abiding relationship with Jesus I must spend quality time with Him.

1) Set aside some time when you can be alone and things are quiet.

All of the great Christians of the past scheduled time in the morning to be with God.

Psalm 5:3 (NKJV)

³ My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct *it* to You, And I will look up.

Psalm 88:13 (NKJV)

¹³ But to You I have cried out, O LORD, And in the morning my prayer comes before You.

Use this time to think and get alone with the Lord to talk with Him and to read and meditate on His Word.

Keep a note pad handy to write down insights and other things God might be saying to you to meditate on and pray about throughout your day.

2) When you read the Word don't race through it.

One author said,

"When you read your Bible, receive and savor it like food [not 'fast food'], like a treasure, like a love letter from God to you...Ponder what you have read, and apply it to your present circumstances. Let it go down into the core of your being. And as you read, expect Him to commune with you. Paul advised, 'Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly'" (Colossians 3:16)

3) When you spend time with the Lord talk and listen to Him like a Person.

So often we treat the Lord like on object we talk 'at' instead of a Person we talk and listen 'to'.

The goal is to build a relationship with a Person—not with a *force* or an *essence*.

Talk to Him the way you would talk to a friend—tell Him your fears and concerns, upcoming decisions, and thank and praise Him for His answers.

Philippians 4:6 (NLT2)

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

1 Peter 5:7

...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

4) Keep a daily written record of what God is doing in your life.

This is not a diary but a record of your personal journey with God—a journal. Write down personal struggles, disappointments, victories, and anything else that is related to your walk with God. Also write down your prayers and then later record how God answered them.

c. To maintain an abiding relationship with Jesus I need to learn to dwell in His presence all day.

One busy mom named Annie shared how she accomplishes this—

“I’m putting away groceries, and the kids are tearing through the house with the bags over their heads, screaming. I can be a little frazzled, but inside I’m saying, ‘Jesus, You are here with me, in me, around me. Thank You for food and for my noisy kids’—I’m not always successful at this, but I try to take Jesus with me wherever go. We keep each other constant company.”

Paul said, *“In Him we live and move and have our being.”* (Acts 17:28)

5. Overcoming Barriers To Abiding

a. Realize that abiding is not based on feelings.

Abiding is an act of *faith*, believing that God loves you and wants to spend time with you; and believing that as James promised us, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”*

So often we believe that if I spend time with God and I don’t *feel* His presence or have an emotional rush that God hasn’t been there with me or that my relationship with Him is defective—after a few days I get discouraged and quit—*“Abiding didn’t work for me.”*

One author said—

“We understand this in our marriages and other significant friendships. My love for my wife is constant—but my feelings for her are far different during an argument than they are during a candlelight dinner. We don’t measure the depth of our relationship by our feeling at any particular moment.”

Just understanding this one principle can revolutionize your time with the Lord.

b. Understand that abiding is impossible without obeying Him.

John 15:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.**

The main idea behind abiding is *remaining with or staying close to Jesus.*

You can’t stay close to Jesus if you’re walking in sin—that’s going in the opposite direction from where Jesus is wanting to lead your life.

John 10:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**

6. The Benefits Of Abiding

a. Abiding helps us to sense the leading of The Lord.

Through abiding I develop ‘ears to hear’ what the Spirit is saying to me—I learn to hear and recognize the ‘still small voice of God.’

b. Abiding helps us tap into all of God’s spiritual riches and power.

Acts 4:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...

Acts 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

c. Abiding gives us fresh strength for our day and our service.

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

³¹ But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

John 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

*"Connected with Him in His love,
I am more than conqueror;
without Him, I am nothing.
Like some railway tickets in America,
I am "Not good if detached."
—Corrie ten Boom*

d. Abiding carries with it the promise of answered prayer.

John 15:7 (NKJV)

⁷ **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.**

e. Abiding contains within it the promise of great joy.

John 15:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

Psalms 16:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Andrew Murray—

"Abiding means going out from everything else, to occupy one place and stay there. Come away from all else, and set your heart on Jesus, and His love—that love will waken your faith and strengthen it. Occupy yourself with that love, worship it, wait for it. You may be sure it will reach out to you, and by its power take you up into itself as your abode and your home."

THE CONCLUSION

Remember that this whole series has been about bearing fruit—but fruit is something that takes time to grow and that requires patience on our part.

James 5:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Yet this isn't easy for us who are not used to farming and growing things—those of us who are living in 21st century America.

It's hard because we live in a culture where we have become accustomed to getting what we want immediately. For example:

- With the push of a button the TV comes on immediately.
- We stick our food in the microwave and in seconds it's ready.
- We demand super-fast internet speeds where with a click of our mouse we move from one webpage to the next instantly.

We have gotten used to everything being 'on-demand'—which the dictionary defines as "*at any time that someone wants or needs something.*" So, this mindset tends to carry over into our spiritual lives where we want an immediate return on what we do for God.

However, that's not the way it works—not in physical farming and certainly not in our spiritual lives with regard to sowing and reaping.

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)

⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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