

Abiding – Effortless or Energized?
John 15:5b – “...w/o Me you can do nothing.”
Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Bethany Baptist Church
August 20, 2017 (p.m.)

...pray...

Read text – John 15:1-11.

John 15 begins with Jesus' allegory of the *vine & branch* & the *vinedresser*.

We've already harvested some key truths from Jesus' illustration:

We are *commanded* to abide in Christ (4).

We bear **NT** *fruit* as we abide (4,5; e.g.. of *Spirit, good works, evangelism, answered prayer*).

We are *sanctified* (pruned) as we abide (2); but *judged* if we won't (2, 6).

We *glorify God* as we abide (8, → *bear fruit*).

We gain *assurance* as we abide (8; again, *bear fruit*).

We experience Christ's *love* as we abide (9-10).

We experience *joy* as we abide (11)!

Underlying *all* of this & the *crux* of Jesus' message is simply this: "***Abide in Me.***"

V.4 – *Abide in Me & I in you; unless you abide in Me*

V.5 – *He who abides in Me & I in Him*

V.6 – *If anyone does **not** abide in Me*

V.7 – *If you abide in Me; if My words abide in you*

V.9 – *abide in My love*

V.10 – (again) *abide in My love*

That's it! "***Abide in Me.***"

Abiding in your Savior is a fundamental aspect of the fruitful Christian life.

But *how*...?

Let's begin by *wrestling* with a John 15 question that sincere Christians have *wrestled* with for hundreds of years: "Is '*abiding*' **me** doing *nothing* while **God** does *everything*?"

1. We've all read it on the posters in the Christian bookstore: "*Let go & let God!*" That *poster* has been around *forever*... ☺
2. To be more historically precise, we could rewind back to 17th century France & the life & writings of Madame Guyon (contemporaries).
 - a. Madame Guyon was a Roman Catholic mystic who advocated a philosophy that church history knows as *quietism* (→ *quiet*).
 - b. Simply defined as "*withdrawing from activity in the spiritual life in order to allow God to work.*" → *I am quiet; God is at work.*
 - i. That sounds *spiritual*, it certainly appeals to *some personalities*.
 - ii. Is *quietism biblical*? Is the *abiding life* a *spiritually sedentary life* of just *letting go* & simply *letting God*?
 - c. Practically speaking, it *doesn't* work too well! You can't *trek* the *narrow way* without picking up your backpack & *moving forward*.
 - i. As we'll examine more carefully in a few minutes, Jesus had a lot to say (incl. John 15) about *doing* while *abiding*.
 - d. In defense of this "*let go*" view of *abiding*, its champions were probably often reacting to *legalism*.
 - i. *Legalism* is a lifestyle defined by *man-made* religious rules drafted to go please God by *my* good works & secure my *salvation*, and which often go *beyond* the commandments of Scripture.
 1. So *quietist* writers & teachers recognized the *frustrating errors* of *legalism*, but in response tended to *over-correct*. Like turning your steering wheel *too far* & *too fast* the other way when your car slides on *black ice* (the hard-to-see *black ice* of *legalism*).

- e. To further defend the later *quietists*, such as teachers in the 19th century *Higher Life*, or *Kewick, Movement*, they weren't always careful to balance everything they wrote, every place they wrote.
 - i. I.e., they often *knew* better than they (in places) *wrote*.

So if “*Let go & let God*” is a little *unbalanced & unworkable*, what did Jesus *mean* in John 15 & what does the rest of the NT have to contribute?

1. Let's read v.5 again. *Apart from me you can do nothing.*
2. There are **2 type** of people defined in Jesus' straight-forward statement:
 - a. The *non-abider*, who can *do nothing* of eternal significance.
 - b. The *Christ-abider*, who *bears spiritual fruit*.
 - c. We want to be in the *second picture!* → *with Christ, fruitful for Christ.*
3. But nothing in Jesus' teaching (here, elsewhere in the Gospels) indicates that you lay around in a *spiritual hammock* watching Jesus *whacking all the weeds & watering all the rows in the garden!*
4. The point is...
 - a. ...**not** that you & I just *chill in the Spirit*.
 - b. ...but that we don't simply *rely only on ourselves, our smarts, our strength, our priorities* to live our lives.
 - i. But that we *rely first & daily* on Jesus (Word) in all that we do! (And Jesus *does* use the word “**do**” in v.5!)
 - ii. It's all about setting ourselves to *depend on Him* as we *do*.

5. A good illustration of this, which you can understand as a Bible-believer, is found in the *Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture*.
 - a. *Who wrote the Gospel of John – the Apostle John, or God?*
 - b. In **21:24**, John writes of *himself* & his *account*: *This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and **wrote** these things.*
 - c. Elsewhere in the **NT** (2 Tm 3:16) – *All Scripture is **inspired by God** (θεοπνευματος – lit. God-breathed).*
 - d. Is it *John* or is it *God*...? You know the answer – it's *both*! And that's the *abiding life*: *I* work as **Christ** works *in & through* me.

6. Rosscup writes: *A Christian is fruitful only in the measure that the life of Christ the Vine is flowing into and through his life. Opposition arises between one's personal effort and Christ's effort working through him only if he is struggling to do it in self-sufficient power and wisdom, that of the flesh, w/o truly **relying upon Christ**.*

7. Is the *abiding life* **you** or is it **Him**...? **Yes!** ☺

“How do I abide?” That's the *question*!

1. And I want to say, perhaps unnecessarily, that this is a *fundamental call* in understanding the Christian life!
 - a. To *abide in Him* is really synonymous (w.r.t. key **NT** truths) to *walking in Him, following Him, laying down your life on His altar.*
 - b. This text, thus, ranks with **Psa 1** – *How blessed is the man* & **Eph 4** – *walk in manner worthy of your calling* & **Mk 4** – *“Follow Me...”* & **Rom 12** – *I urge you, therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living & holy sacrifice.*
 - c. **“Abide in Me, and I in you.”**

2. ...how...?

- a. Let's begin by remembering what you asking for, what you *must* ask for: "*abide*" (verb, action, present tense → lifestyle) - *remain, live with*. You are *living with Christ*, day by day.
- b. And the result is that *as you walk & work*, Christ *lives & walks & works in you*.
 - i. Paul writes, **Phil 2:12-13 (turn & read)**. **One** sentence, **one** huge idea!
 - ii. **V.12** – *You work...*
 - iii. **V.13** – *He works in & through you* – the outcome is the *fruit of His good pleasure*.
 - iv. *That's it! This is the abiding life!* This is what you're *asking for!*
- c. So here is how to begin: *ask* Christ to abide in you. I'm a *big fan* of *asking* God to do the things He calls me to do.
 - i. I *don't* mean a come to the altar, *once & for all & it's finished* action; ...
 - ii. I mean a daily & conscious *appeal* to Him to strengthen you to remain *aware & faithful* – to *abide*.
- d. **Depend** on Christ. See Him as your strength...
- e. Then **obey** the commands of abiding.
 - i. **V.7** - *...if My words abide in you...* (i.e. His *commands*).
 - ii. The *life of abiding* is lived out in the *Word, prayer (7), fellowship, obedience, & diligence in the NT disciplines*.

- f. Finally, **trust** that Jesus will *do* just as He *promises*. This is crucial because you don't always *feel* like you are *abiding* or even immediately see some kind of *tangible* results. **Fruit grows slow!**
 - i. Scripture teaches that *we walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Cor 5).
 - ii. If you are *seeking to abide*, Christ's Spirit **will strengthen you to abide! Trust Him!**
- g. **How do you abide? Ask...depend...obey...trust...repeat daily!**

To *walk*, to *follow*, to *lay down*, to *abide*...

1. These are *foundational, life-defining* concepts of the Christian lifestyle.
2. We are called to *do*, but when we do not depend upon His life, all that we do is *vain, unfruitful*.
3. *A life of abiding and bearing fruit will be one of effort. To the degree that we really **depend** upon Christ to live His **vine life** in & through us in all the effort of our lives, we **will be fruitful** (170).*

Tonight, as we close in prayer, I want to ask you to spend a moment *alone with Christ* asking Him for the *grace* to *abide in Him* this week (*go back to Him soon!*).

...silence...prayer...