

## Abiding in Christ

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you (John 15:7).

Communion represents the soul and body of Christ entering and changing you, until His nature so consumes you that spirit, soul, and body you become like Him. This union is the only way you can change, the only way you can overcome sin, the only way you can walk in the spiritual, or miraculous, realm. This is the grace that brings salvation.

Jesus said, in an enigmatic reference to communion, in John 6:56, that “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” Paul said, “Christ in you [is your] hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).” Baptism and the Lordship of Jesus begin our being in Christ, and then communion represents our continuing, or abiding, in Christ.

Christ shared how to abide, as well as the results, on the night of the first communion. He said, “The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves (John 14:10-11).” When Christ only did what the Father authorized, the Father did His works through Christ. The results were impressive.

Christ then described how you can abide in Him in the same way that Jesus abides in the Father. Phase one is believing in Him. Unfortunately, in our English Bibles the word “in” is rather ambiguous. The Greek has no ambiguity: the Greek word means “into.” You believe *into* Christ. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in[to] Me, *the works that I do shall he do also*; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father (John 14:12).” Faith brings you *into* Christ. You then live in Christ. The deeper your faith becomes, the more deeply you go into, and within, Christ.

Faith here, obviously, means more than mere intellectual assent. Faith does begin in intellectual agreement, but ends in total commitment. Its complete meaning includes the concept best illustrated by the common dog’s name, “Fido,” the Latin word for “faith” or

“faithful.” Fido is attached, hooked, to his master and would never desert him. He *abides* with his master (to the degree his master will let him :). While Fido may not *always* be able to remain with his master, your faith attaches you to Christ, causing you to continually abide “in Christ.”

Jesus described the result of phase 1 in John 14:16-20,

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Phase 1: believe into Christ. Phase 2: receive the Spirit of Christ into your life. Phase 3: any time you step out of Christ through sin, repent to return to your position in Christ. When the Spirit of Christ merges with your spirit, you will know you are in Christ and Christ is in you, no longer only in promise but in present reality. The result is that the same works Christ did, as He was filled with the power of the Father, you will do as you are filled with the power of Christ.

While I was sharing about the miraculous power of God, the man to whom I was witnessing said, “You can’t do miracles, only Jesus does miracles!” I then asked him, “Where does Jesus live now? Doesn’t He live within you?!” This is the whole point of the New Covenant. The power, the love, the life, the grace of God is present to do what previously could not be accomplished, because now Christ abides in you!

Jesus’ next illustration showed what He meant by “abiding.” After describing how He and the Father would make their abode with His disciples, He said, “These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you (John 14:25).” Your “abode” is the place in which you abide, or live. Christ came to this earth to live with us, not just to visit. We became His life. As He prepared to leave, to no longer abide, or live, in this world, He began preparing His disciples to live, or abide, in Him.

Jesus further illustrated abiding in Him on that first communion night using the parable of the vine and the branches in a set of verses from John 15:1-7:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit (John 15:1-2).” At baptism and the acceptance of Jesus’ Lordship, immediately Christ begins abiding, or living, within you. Which means He also immediately begins pruning, shaping, transforming, and working on His new home. Anything that is good He makes better. Anything which is unusable is removed and destroyed. A huge part of abiding in Christ is simply allowing this housecleaning to take place without resisting it.

Much of this pruning process is accomplished as you attempt to follow the Word of God. “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3),” said Jesus.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (John 15:4-6).” Those who refuse to be pruned by not allowing the unusable portions of their lives to be destroyed, will find themselves no longer abiding in Christ. Eventually, unless they repent, they will be cast away.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you (John 15:7).” This verse holds one of the more important practical principles of abiding, in addition to its awesome promise. Usually Scripture refers to Christ abiding in you and you abiding in Him; in this verse you abide in Christ, and Christ’s *words* abide in you. The more deeply His Word abides in you, the more deeply Christ abides in you, and you in Him. The direct union of Christ with you is created by the entrance of the Holy Spirit, but the words of Christ, the words of Scripture, prepare the receptacle of your heart. To the degree you have the words of Christ, you will be able to receive His Spirit.

I take special notice of what *I* can do, since most of our salvation is waiting upon grace from our Lord. I cannot pour out the Spirit of God upon my life nor create the union between God and myself, but I can make sure I am ready when He comes. One of the easiest preparations

is abiding in the words of Christ. This is not just study, nor just obedience; it encompasses both and more. The principle of abiding in the words of Scripture is well stated in Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.” Here, “meditate” means to “mutter or ponder upon.” As you focus on God’s Word, viewing all else through its lense, you will see God’s perfect plan and find yourself living His lifestyle more and more and abiding more and more in Him. You will become successful in everything you do. Or, as the New Testament says, “ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”

But the greatest result of abiding in Christ is that “No one who abides in Him sins (1 John 3:6).” Those who have difficulty with this verse and similar ones written by John have usually missed that the entire book of 1 John, and much of his Gospel, is about abiding in Christ. *Those who abide in Him can never sin!* You can never prevent yourself from sinning, but you can die to yourself and allow Christ to live through you. There is then no boasting about how perfect you are; you are dead; but Christ is *alive!* Christ will mold and change you, forming you into the way He wants you to be.

The only way a person can stop this transformation once it has begun is to no longer abide in Christ. A person can do that by deciding to disobey. This is not the disobedience like before, when it was hard to do right. When you are abiding, you are empowered to do right. This disobedience is an intentional decision to step out of God’s will. The result is that you step back into the old nature. The last half of 1 John 3:6 says that “no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.” In other words, if you choose this route, you put back on the nature that never knew Christ. At any particular moment, you live in one nature or the other, one realm or the other. Sin moves you one direction, repentance and obedience the other.

1 John 3:24 says that “the one who keeps [Christ’s] commandments abides in Him, and He in him.” This is how you know that you are abiding in Christ: by whether you are keeping His commands. If you are having difficulty following His commands, it is because you are no

longer abiding in Him. Repentance returns you to the Kingdom of light.

John again says, in a scripture which only works in the context of abiding, “His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).” Part of the curse upon mankind was that all work, including works of righteousness, would be difficult because sin caused mankind to no longer live in the presence of God (Genesis 3:17-19). Because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and the blood covenant, you can return to that intimate presence of God, abiding with Christ continually, where all work and all service become easy and joyful.