

Abide in Christ, part 2

Luke 7:18-35

What are the reasons to abide in Christ? And I think even as we talk about the reasons to abide in Christ, we're gonna see how it's done. We're going to see how this works. For every true believer, Christ gives six compelling reasons to obey. The gracious motivation Christ gives us, here, it becomes the impetus of our obedience, the driving force of our obedience. And it's obedience to Christ that leads to bearing fruit in our lives. And bearing fruit in our lives opens the flood gates of all manner of divine blessing to us.

First, first reason: Abide in Christ. Very simply, so that you can bear fruit. Abide in Christ so you can bear fruit, Verses 4-5, "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." It's very simple,

very plain, not hard to understand branches have no life in and of themselves. In order to be fruitful, their sole purpose, they must remain in vital connection with the vine. Now, while they have no vitality in and of themselves, that does not mean that branches are worthless. They're actually perfectly suited, perfectly designed as vessels of vitality. That is what God designed them to be and to do. So when they are fulfilling their purpose, they are perfect, exactly what God wanted. They're conduits of productivity. They carry the life of the vine through themselves, through the conduit, out to the stems and the flowers and the pods, where grapes are formed and with proper cultivation formed in abundance.

As branches, we can expect nothing in and of ourselves. But when we look to Christ and when we abide in him and remain in him, we can expect that he will bear much fruit through us. And we should expect that. We should expect that remaining in him and being obedient to his Word, and following everything that says here, we should expect to see fruit. That's his promise.

Let's look at a second reason that motivates us, look at verse 6, second, abide in Christ. Two things, here, we could

say, abide in Christ to escape judgment, number one and two, to persevere to the end. Abide in Christ to escape wrath and condemnation and judgment, on the one hand; we look into the future. Abide in Christ also to persevere, to endure to the end, to stand firm to the end. Fruit is not just one benefit of planting and tending grape vines. Fruit is the only benefit. Those plants are so temperamental and labor-intensive that if it doesn't produce fruit, you're not going to spend any time, attention, energy, money, anything, planting a vine. So if the branches aren't doing their job, they have no purpose.

And God has various ways of revealing which are the useless and fruitless branches in the church. Sometimes he exposes those useless and unproductive branches through the process of church discipline, Matthew 18. He uses his people in a case of church discipline to reveal that. Sometimes he just takes those things away with swift judgment. Other times, these unproductive, fruitless branches they simply walk away on their own. They just leave the fellowship. They find something else that doesn't bother their conscience so much.

Whatever the route they take to become severed from the vine, these are the ones that the Apostle John wrote about in 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." Again, the same verb, there, *menó*, they would have remained with us, they would have abided with us, "abiding in Christ." But they didn't. They departed. Jesus said so clearly, as a warning to us, Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father."

We wouldn't say that those words that warning from Christ incites dread or terror in a true believer. We know that "perfect love casts out fear." God has forgiven all of our sins in the cross work of the Savior, on the Cross, past, present, future sins. He died to forgive us and cleanse us of all the sins, namely if we could summarize it, sins against love. We didn't "love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength." We didn't love our neighbor as ourself. In fact, we hated God. We didn't believe him. We distrusted him. We, didn't, we slandered him. We gave ourselves to a different idol, really our self as an idol. We were self-centered.

Christ died to forgive all of that. And God has looked upon his sacrifice for all those who believe and declared those people forgiven. Not only that, but we are now robed in the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, his fulfillment of all the Law, never omitting one command, never committing one sin, obeying in thought, word, and deed. The love of God and love of neighbor, he perfectly fulfilled. He fulfilled it to the uttermost.

He endured, stood against any testing and trial to solicit him to sin. He wore out the temptation and drove away the tempter. He fulfilled all righteousness, and that perfect, spotless righteousness is now the gift of every true believer. So then not only are all our sins taken away, but now we stand having fulfilled the law of God. So when we stand before the bar of God's justice as truly guilty, he can look upon Christ and see that we believe, we trust, and declare us righteous, not just not guilty, but positively righteous. Both things are true.

So we wouldn't say that these words, these warnings from Christ, incite dread or terror in any true believer. "There is

therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” But God uses the warnings of Scripture, doesn’t he? He uses them for our sake, in order to preserve true believers to the end. The Spirit put these warnings in Scripture because of grace. Warnings like this tear us away from the world. And they spur us on to daily self-examination, to fruit inspection.

Third: Abide in Christ so you can work the will of God. So you can work the will of God, this is verse 7. I wish we had more time to linger here, but this is so, so good. Jesus said, “If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” He didn’t qualify that, did he? Look early in verse 3, Jesus said, “You’re clean because of the word I have spoken to you,” that’s *logos*. The word, word, is *Logos*, it refers to the Gospel. Here, when Jesus says, “If my words abide in you,” he’s using the word, *rhema*, and that refers to the sayings of Christ, individual teachings of Christ, things like the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, and on it goes.

It’s not enough, listen, it’s not enough to know the facts of the Gospel. It’s not enough to have a grasp of Christian doctrine, to be able to recite points of theology. You need to

know Jesus Christ personally and through a deep familiarity with his teachings. What drives that pursuit of knowledge? What motivates this interest in Jesus' sayings, his teachings, to know Christ through all that he has said and taught. That's the mark of an intimate relationship. Jesus' sayings are going to be at home in you when he becomes an intimate friend to you. You will love his teachings because they are what help you to understand your dearest friend.

This is the key to the whole thing. This right here is how abiding in Christ works. This is how it generates so much effectual power. This is how it produces so much fruit. Those words in verse 7, when they are received by a regenerate, converted, worshipful heart, when they are received by a humble, teachable, obedient heart, those words convey the very power of God to save and sanctify the believer. As Jesus said, verse 3, his Word is so powerful, it is powerful to effect the salvation of the believer. Here in verse 6, his teachings are powerful to effect the sanctification of the believer. There's power in what he says. There's power in what he teaches to save and to sanctify.

Listen, when his teachings, when you really get them, when you really grasp them, when they wash over your mind, your will, your desires, they come into conformity with the perfect will of God. And when that happens, beloved, watch this, verse 7, "Ask whatever you wish," whatever you wish, "and it will be done for you." You say, Is that an unqualified statement of health, wealth, and prosperity? No, it is not. It's qualified. It's qualified with this: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you." If that qualification is met, then your mind changes. Your will aligns with God's will. You pray according to his will because those are your desires. That's how you become a healthy and effective branch. That's how you become a true conduit of vitality, carrying out the father's will.

All right, I wish I could linger, but I can't. Number 4, another reason, verse 8, fourth, Abide in Christ so you can glorify God. That follows, right? Abide in Christ so you can glorify God. If you're bearing fruit, if you're accomplishing God's will on earth, that means you are bringing glory to God, verse 8, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."



We bring glory to God when we bear spiritual fruit. So thoughts and actions, words, behaviors, intentions, motivations, ambitions, plans; all that is fruit that only God can explain. Fruit that can only be attributed to the mighty working of the Spirit of God and to him alone. It's not false fruit. It's not platitudes. It's not faux humility. It's not flesh-motivated service. It's not carnality masquerading as religiosity. It's God-borne fruit. It's God-produced fruit. It's fruit that only God can bring, things like Galatians 5:22. We bring glory to God when we're conduits of doing his will, revealing his character, speaking his truth. All glory to the vinedresser! All glory to God, who planted the vine and cultivated it and kept it and produced the fruit. All glory to the divine owner of the vineyard, who funded it, resourced it, empowered it, grew it, strengthened it, produced all the fruit, all glory to God! That's our joy in producing fruit.

Reason number 5: Abide in Christ so you can participate in divine love. This is incredible, verses 9 and 10, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love." And Jesus has, here, shifted the command, you'll notice, from "Abide in me," and now he says, "Abide in my love." Why the change? If we broaden it out a bit, we can see how Christ has developed a

thought. He starts with "Abide in me," verse 4, that emphasizes our spiritual union with the person of Christ. Then he moves to "let my words abide in you," verse 7, that emphasizes the power of Christ in his Word to save and to sanctify. Now it's "abide in my love." So to emphasize love, it takes the person of Christ and combines it with the power of Christ, making them effectual to accomplish the work of Christ namely, to demonstrate the love of God for us.

I love the comparison. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." Or in the same way, also, I also have loved you. How has the father loved Christ? Fully, infinitely, perfectly, deeply, eternally, passionately, tenderly, zealously, jealously. We could add more and more adverbs to that, how he has loved God, or how he has loved Christ. So how does Christ love his disciples? How does Christ love us? Same way. Jesus followed the pattern of divine love; the father's love for him as the son. He turns and then applies that same pattern of love to you and to me; those for whom he died. If we're to remain in that love. We're to abide in it. We're to hold fast to it. There's no mystery about this.

He tells us how it happens, how to remain in the love of Christ. Same way Christ remained in his father's love by doing what he said. He just did what he said. "If you keep my commandments," verse 10, "you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love." This is not about gaining or maintaining a right standing with God. A right standing with God comes by God's grace through faith. God did that, verse 3, causing every true believer to be born again by the Word of Christ and by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. Nothing about earning, here. Nothing about legalism.

But what is here is the evidence of the true relationship, the proof of a relationship. You say you love God? Don't just talk about it. Prove it. Your obedience ought to flow from love, your will directed by affection by God, your love for Christ, for his people, for the church. The course of your life ought to be set by the loving ambitions, motivated by loving motivations, loving decisions, free choices of a regenerated nature, a heart that is inclined toward God.

So don't tell me that you're all about love when you do not obey Christ's commandments. Don't tell me you're all about love

when you stand aloof from the people Christ loved, the people for whom Christ died. If you love God, if you love God's son, then you're gonna busy yourself loving those whom he loves. You're going to love his people, too. You're going to do it with great sacrifice just like he did. Why not?

If we truly love and trust Jesus Christ, then keeping commandments is our greatest joy. It's true freedom for us. It's our settled peace. It's our perfect happiness and contentment. Keeping his commandments means walking with Christ. It means keeping in step with the Holy Spirit. It means becoming conduits of the love of God.

So if we summarize where we've been so far, Abide in Christ to bear fruit, to escape judgment and endure to the end, to do God's will, to glorify God, and to remain in God's love. So six: Abide in Christ that you can be full of divine joy. Verse 11, "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." It's a purpose clause that governs that verse. This whole section, this whole teaching, this saying, this, *rhema* of Christ, this is for the express purpose of filling our lives with divine joy. It's the word,

*chara*. It's translated joy, delight, gladness, rejoicing. This is profound, exuberant happiness, and a happiness that has no regret.

Think about your life as a pagan, I mean just momentarily, before Christ. Think about the times when you indulged in sin. Why did you indulge in sin? Because you thought that that was the key to your happiness at the moment, right? And you saw by indulging in sin, that when you gave yourself to that sin, when you unleashed that verbal tirade against that coworker or against that, you know, someone, some family relation because you thought, I'm going to give it to them. They deserve it! And, boy, you relished in the anger of that.

Or you gave yourself to that lust, or you gave yourself to that ambition that you stepped over others to get ahead and get the money and win the day, all that stuff. You did that because you thought, that is going to lead to my fulfillment. That is what is going to earn my greatest happiness. I'll do whatever it takes to get it. What happened when you got there? Momentary enjoyment, but it was fleeting, wasn't it? It dissipates. It falls away; it comes apart.

It's like seeing in the desert; hungry, tired and you see in the distance a pool of water. And you run and run and you work and you work and you get there and you find it's a mirage. There's nothing there but more sand. That's what it's like, is it not? The joys of sin are fleeting and unrewarding and condemning and damning and degrading. This joy, fulness, happiness, delight, gladness, *chara*. That's what he wants to give to you. And with no regret. This is the key to it all. This is how our questions at the beginning are answered fully and completely. This is how our weaknesses and frailties and inconsistencies in obeying are increasingly overcome.

Is there any happier being in the universe than God? I'll answer. No. There is no happier being in the universe than God. God is the blessed and only sovereign, according to 1 Timothy 6:15. He is the happiest, the most delighted, joyful being in eternal existence. And God is the source of all being. And as such, that means that he is also the source of all joy. He is the source of all blessedness. He is the source of all happiness, of all contentment, of all fulfillment. So since Jesus is the Son of God, possessing the divine nature, he, too,

is filled with the same joy, the same delight, the same blessedness in being God and everything that God rejoices in.

As a man with a truly human nature, Jesus Christ, the Son of man, he is perfectly and wholly possessed with divine joy. He is driven and motivated by fulness of joy. No obedience that Jesus offered before God was performed reluctantly. Never did he complain, Ahh...gotta die on the cross. Ahh...gotta pray for these people. He never did that. He wasn't hesitant. He was all in. He was jealous and zealous for obedience.

Think about what we've learned from Jesus in Luke 9 and other texts as well. Think about some of the harder sayings of Jesus, things like "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Or something maybe even harder for some of us: "Love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you and hate you, those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you." Is there anything that Jesus commands that he has not first accomplished himself, and in the accomplishing, did he accomplish with grumbling and complaining or did he do it with joy? Hebrews 12 again, "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame."

So is there anything he commands, not only that he has not done himself? But is there anything that he commands, that he has not intended for our joy? It's an evil and unbelieving impulse of the sin nature that doubts the goodness and the kind intentions of God, that refuses obedience to his clearly revealed commands. When we resist his will, when we shrink back from obedience, we reveal, frankly, our lack of trust in him. We reveal that we somehow doubt his goodness, doubt his character, think he's less than he is.

And that's going to compromise our ability to obey this one command: "Abide in me." It's devastating to our life. Devastating. It makes shipwreck of our faith. But if we obey that one command, just that one command, "Abide in me," knowing the joys at the end, knowing that his good intentions, his love, his, all his desires for our fulfillment are at the end; we'll obey that one command; becomes a cascade of obedience. It becomes a fountain of living waters to us, overflowing in our souls. What a tender Christ.



What a good and kind Savior that he would endure such suffering for the likes of us poor, wretched sinners that he would involve us in the outworking of God's eternal decree through prayer and obedience. That he would lavish us with divine love in order that he might fill our hearts with the delight of divine joy. And what, but an unbelieving heart would ever resist that?

Let me close with the words of Charles Spurgeon. It's a blessed reminder to us believers, but it's also a gracious call to anyone here who's not yet a Christian. Spurgeon said, "How I wish that everybody here knew my dear Lord and Master. I tell you who do not know Christ and do not experimentally know what true religion is that five minutes' realization of the love of Christ would be better for you than a million years of your present choicest delights.

"There is more brightness in the dark side of Christ than in the brightest side of this poor world. I would sooner lie on a bed and ache in every limb with the death sweat standing on my brow by the month and year together, persecuted, despised, and

forsaken, poor and naked, with the dogs to lick my sores and the devils to tempt my soul and have Christ for my friend.

“Then I would sit in the palaces of wicked kings, with all their wealth and luxury and pampering and sin. Even at our worst estate, it’s better to be God’s dog than the devil’s darling. It’s better to have the crumbs and the moldy crust that fall from Christ’s table for the dogs than to sit at the head of princely banquets with the ungodly. I’d rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. God bless you,” he said, “and save you.” So said Spurgeon, pleading with the non-Christian, and I’ll only add, God bless you and sanctify you that you may enter into the fulness of the joy of your Master.