

Benefits of Abiding in Christ, Part 1

December 10, 2017

Turn in your Bibles to the epistle of 1 John. 1 John. We're going to look at that encouraging portion at the very end of the second chapter, going into the third chapter, the beginning there. So starting in 1 John 2:28. "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

You see back in verse 28 that little word, abide, that command abide? It's a vital word there of command. To abide in Christ. A synonym for that, remain in him, stand fast, stay put, don't go anywhere. The tense of the command there indicates that they need to keep on abiding in the Gospel of Christ, to keep on remaining in him, steadfast in him, faithful to the very, very end.

That's in contrast to phony Christians, all the false professors of Christianity that come in and out of the church. They are the ones who, well they hang around for a time, and sometimes they hang around for many, many years. But their false motives, their lack of genuine faith is eventually exposed by really an anti-Christ spirit. It's either false doctrine or it's enticement to some kind of a sinful habit of thinking or living. That's the anti-Christ spirit that draws all the false professors away and makes them stand apart from the truth. They don't, they don't stay. Maybe they sit in the same seat, but they don't stay in their hearts. They're gone. They depart. They go away.

So how can true Christians avoid the influence of the false? How can they discern carefully, especially when they face, really, a supernatural anti-Christ spirit? How can they stand up to really skillful false teachers, who are trained in greed, practiced in spiritual deception? How do they stand firm against people like that? Same warning Jesus gave at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, right? "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit, right? So watch out who you are following."

So how can the sheep, just being sheep, how can they find safety from the wolves? Look back at verse 24 in 1 John 2. Verse 24 and following, "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us-eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you receive from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie-just as it has taught you, abide in him." Stay put. Stand fast. Be firm. Fixed. Don't go anywhere.

So how do we stay safe and strong? How do we discern danger? How do we avoid error? How do we grow healthy and mature? Well, let Christ's teaching, which you heard from the beginning, let that teach you, that word, that truth, abide in you. If his teaching abides in you, then you will, as a matter of course, abide in the Son and in the Father, which is manifest in your habitual pursuit of truth and your practice of love and obedience. In other words, to stay safe and strong, to grow in wisdom and discernment and maturity, stay close to the shepherd. Stay close to him. He will make us lie down in green pastures, he will lead us and guide us safely beside still waters. Simply abide. Simply keep your eye on him and follow him.

So that's where I want to direct our attention as we look to 1 John 2:28-3:3. Really, to the benefits of abiding in Christ, to the benefits of standing firm, staying fixed, following him. We're going to see six benefits of abiding in Christ and I hope that seeing the benefits of abiding in Christ, that you will be encouraged to stay put, that you'll be encouraged to stand firm in him. Okay? That's where we want to be.

First benefit of abiding in Christ: abiding in Christ means continual vivification, continual vivification. Back in verses 24-25, I'm going to make this point by transgressing the boundaries of our verse; versification here, so our verse range, but so, I know you'll forgive me for that because you're Christians. So we're going to transgress the boundaries of the verse range.

Go back to 24 and 25 and start with this as a foundational first point, okay. Look at verse 24, "Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise he made to us, eternal life." Or I could say, This is the promise he made to us, continual vivification. Put simply, remaining in him, abiding in him means eternal life.

We tend to think of eternal simply as a word that refers to quantity that's never-ending, there is no end to it. But it is not, eternal is not a word in Scripture that refers only to

quantity of life, more importantly and most fundamentally eternal is a word that refers to quality of life, kind of life. It's an eternal kind of life. And so by abiding in Christ and remaining in his word, his word remaining in us and us remaining in his word, the Gospel you have heard from the beginning, you partake of that promise that he made to you that this eternal kind of life, the very energy of God himself will be in you.

Look back at chapter 1. Look at the way that John opened his epistle. He said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard." This is John speaking as an Apostle and an eyewitness of Christ, right. And so he says, "That which is from the beginning, which we have heard." He's not talking about just visions in the night. He's talking about, he literally heard Jesus speak to him. The sound waves hit his auditory nerves, processed in his brain, and he thought through the teaching.

"That which is from the beginning, which we've heard, which we've seen with our eyes." John saw him, spent time with him. "Which we looked upon." We observed. We watched. We saw his, his days begin and his days end. We saw him get tired, take naps, eat food. We saw him do everything. So "Which we've looked upon

and we've touched with our hands." I always think of John the Apostle, he called himself in his Gospel, he didn't even use his own name. He said, I've got a better title for myself; I'm the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And he talks about leaning his head back at the mealtime on Jesus' chest. That close, that intimate. Yeah, "touched with our hands, concerning the word of life." What does it say in verse 2? "The life was made manifest, and we've seen it. We've looked upon it. We testified to it and we proclaim to you," what? "The eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us." Listen, that life, that eternal life, which was with the father, that's the energy and the life that called the entire universe into being.

It's the very life that was made manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ. That is the life that John and the other apostles saw and heard and listened to and touched and knew intimately and personally. That's the life that they proclaim to us. It's no phantom. It's no imagination. It's no mystical vision. It's real. A life, the power that created and sustains the universe,

the world in which we live and move and have our being, it's the very same life and power that can and must energize us as well.

Turn over to John 15. John 15. I want to show you something about abiding Christ. You're familiar with this passage, John 15:1-5. And I want to just illustrate this for you. Jesus said this. He's teaching his disciples, and this is the night that he was betrayed.

In the Upper Room, he says, or as they left the Upper Room, he says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he," that is the father, the vinedresser, "he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I've spoken to you. 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."



When God created the world, he created the plant kingdom before he created the animal kingdom, and before creating mankind, as well, the crowning jewel of his creation, the man, man, and woman who would bear his own image. He demonstrated it in plant life for the instruction and reflection of mankind, he demonstrated in plant life the principle of fecundity, or fruit bearing. Same principle here again in John 15 in this word picture about the vine and the branches.

In order for a branch of a grapevine to bear fruit, it has to remain attached to the vine. No vital attachment, no life flowing through it, and therefore, no fruit. A fruitless branch is worthless to the vinedresser. It may bear leaves, but if it bears no grapes, it's just sucking up energy. It's not doing anything. So whatever its appearance is, if the branch is not bearing fruit, that, that is proof that there is some hidden malformation, some, something wrong with that branch, something preventing real and vital attachment. There is no true organic connection between branch and vine. So vinedresser cuts off that fruitless branch. He casts it away, throws it away that it might be swept up and throw into the fire and burned because he, the vinedresser, he needs to focus on pruning. He needs to focus on

shaping his vine, his branches, strengthening true branches, the one that have a real and vital attachment to the lifegiving nutrients of a lifegiving vine.

Same thing with those who abide in Christ. They remain attached to him. And they find his lifegiving power flowing out of him, the vine, and into us, the branches, because there's an organic connection there, that we might manifest, produce the fruit coming from that lifegiving power. Fruit that glorifies God as it says in John 15:8, "By this, my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

Remaining in Christ, it means eternal kind of life. It means continuous stream of spiritual vitality and energy flowing through your life. Turn back to 1 John now. Because everything else that we're going to say from here on out in 1 John, it's going to flow out of this promise of Jesus Christ. This is the promise that he made to us, eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever, whoever believes in him would not perish," yes, but what? Not perishing, forgiveness of sins. That's just the beginning of the relationship. Not perish, but what? "Have eternal life." That's

the start. That's the life that flows in and through us when we abide in him. That's the first benefit of abiding in Christ, continual vivification.

Here's a second benefit: Abiding in Christ means relational conviction. Or we could call it this, we could call it relational certainty, or relational security, relational assurance. Take your pick. But conviction, action flows with the alliteration, so I'd write that one in, okay. Well, we're looking at verse 28, which now is within our verse range. "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming." "Abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming."

There are two phrases in that verse that make it very plain that John is talking about the Second Coming. It's "When he appears," on the first, and secondly, "At his coming." Those two phrases. John obviously is not here providing us a formal treatment of the Second Coming. He doesn't really need to because he treats the Second Coming as a cardinal doctrine of

the Christian church, one that he can safely assume that all his readers, his believing readers, can and have embraced.

So he points, he assumes the doctrine of the Second Coming and then he points to an implication of the reality of the Second Coming. That is to say, it is both the basis of our relational assurance and a key motivation for holy living. That is this, that we do not want to be ashamed at his return.

I still remember fairly vividly when I returned from the Persian Gulf War in the early '90s as a young man, I had the, the privilege of witnessing many joyful homecomings. As sailors and marines came to the pier, their ships pulled up to the pier and they embraced loved ones and family members, who met them with excitement and joy as the ship pulled into the pier and the gang planks went down to the pier. See those families embrace after so long of being apart and to see little kids, some of them trembling with excitement. I don't know if you've ever seen that, little kids just shaking because they're so excited like electricity is flowing through their, their little bodies. And they hug their daddies, and they wrap their arms around their neck again.

I also saw one very sad scene. As a wife greeted her husband, he was a man that we all knew. She was standing at the pier dressed up, but not like she was going to church, more like an eye-catching outfit and high heels like she was about to go to a nightclub. She met her husband at the pier. The greeting was not warm. It was kind of awkward and frankly, ashamed. It was later revealed that she had been unfaithful to him. They soon divorced. We didn't need to know that, though, to see visibly that something was terribly wrong. She was clearly and obviously ashamed at his coming.

Listen, that's why John has written us, written this to us, so that we might not be like that when Christ returns. But rather, that we might be light little children, wildly excited about daddy's return after a prolonged time away. That is why the doctrine of the Second Coming is so precious. Because it points us to our hope of finally seeing our Savior, of being in the physical presence of the one who died for us, who lives for us, who sent his Holy Spirit to reside in each one of us that he might teach us, that he might guide us into all truth.

This is the one who has been interceding for us right now causing us to grow and to mature. He is the one that we love, and we rejoice in. As Peter said, 1 Peter 1:8, "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him you believe in him and you rejoice with joy that's inexpressible and filled with glory." Look, the doctrine of the Second Coming, it's not about millennial charts and dispensational timelines. As much as I love to study all those things myself, it's, it's more about devotion to Christ. It's about anticipating the full consummation of our eternal hope in him.

The Second Coming provides the devotional, the ethical motivation that we need that we might never grow weary, but to keep on abiding in Christ. This temporal life with all of its struggle, sins, and distractions, and challenges, this is not all there is. There will come a day when our adoption is complete, when we see our Savior and beloved Lord.

And so we want to abide in Christ in such a way that when he shows up again, when might that be: Today, tomorrow, next week, next year, several years; only the father knows the day and the hour. But we live in a constant state of expectation

knowing that this might be the day. *Maranatha*, right? So we want to abide in Christ in such a way that when he shows up again, we'll rejoice at his presence without any shame at all. Because we're confident in the intimacy of that relationship we have pursued every single day of our lives.

Again, look at verse 28, "We must abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back from him in shame at his coming." When John says, "We may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame," he's really saying the same thing in two different ways. The repetition there is a Hebrew way of reinforcing certainty. You find that in the poetic and wisdom literature, especially see it in the Proverbs; speaks first about the reassurance that comes from that relational security, that is that we may have confidence. And then likewise, he speaks of the relief that comes from relational security, that is that we will not shrink from him in shame. So reassurance and relief both are here in this verse. Full confidence. No shame. The idea of having no shame in his presence, this verb is *aischyno*, it's to, to be ashamed, or to feel ashamed. But here in the passive voice in this verse, it refers to being put to shame. It refers to being disgraced.

Listen, when Christ returns again, for anybody who is a Christian who's not been walking faithfully, giving themselves to all kinds of temporal and useless pursuits, he won't need to say a thing. It's just going to be the pure holiness of his presence. It's gonna be the loving and yet piercing gaze of his eyes, which can see straight through us. One look from him will cut through all of our excuses, all of our reasons, all of our justifications for why we didn't do as we should have, why we didn't obey him, why we did thus, not such, why we didn't evangelize, why we didn't take discipling interest in other people, why we said, Oh, I don't want to actually address that, it's too difficult.

One look from him, cut right through all of our muddled thinking, all of our confusion, all of our compromises with sin and we will be put to shame. We will be disgraced, and he won't need to say a word. Remember Peter when in a moment of unbelieving cowardice he denied even knowing the Lord. It said in verse 61 of Luke 22 that the Lord turned at that moment when Peter denied him the third time. The rooster crowed and it says



that the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Peter immediately remembered the saying of the Lord. Instant clarity, right?

“He remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And Peter went out and he and wept bitterly.” You know who else was there that day to witness that scene? The Apostle John was there. He’s the one who gained entrance for Peter, allowing him to be there in the courtyard of the High Priest in the first place. John had to have seen his dear friend reduced to bitter tears weeping by just one look from the Lord. Peter’s put to shame.

John doesn’t want that for us. He wants us to abide in Christ so that we never have that experience, we never feel that kind of shame. He’s encouraging us, dear little children, abide in Christ so that we’re relationally secure. And in fact, we’re bold and confident at his coming. The word for confidence there, is *parresia*, *parresia*. It refers to an attitude of, of openness before somebody else. It’s an attitude that has no fear whatsoever because there’s absolute freedom and security within that relationship.

By practicing close intimacy with Christ, by abiding in him, we can have that same confidence, that same lack of inhibition, uninhibited before him. The same sense of relational security and freedom and convictions that when he returns, we may have confidence, never shrinking back from him in shame, but literally running into his presence and into his embrace. That is what John wants for every single believer. And by the way, the author of 1 John is ultimately the Holy Spirit of God, isn't it? So abiding in Christ means continual vivification, which keeps us pursuing him and produces within us a relational conviction. The ice thaws, we get to know him.