

Benefits of Abiding in Christ, Part 2

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Third benefit of abiding in Christ: Abiding in Christ means spiritual regeneration. It means spiritual regeneration. Not, not that we earn or gain spiritual regeneration by abiding in Christ, but that actually approves it. You might say the evidence of the proof of spiritual regeneration is found in abiding in Christ. Look at verse 29. "If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him." So again, back to the principle of vivification, the principle of life-giving. The eternal life of God produces in the believer what? The fruit of righteousness, which is proof-positive of spiritual life because it only comes as a result of being born again, of the new birth.

The practice of righteousness is basically synonymous with abiding in Christ. Those who practice righteousness demonstrate that they are indeed born again. Two Greek words for, knowing, are used in verse 29, *oida* and *ginosko*. They can be synonyms,

but here used together, this isn't just stylistic variation on John's part. He's making a distinction between these two words. The first time John's speaks of what we know, it's the verb *oida*. He says, "You know that he is righteous." That is a settled fact of history. It's a matter of biblical record that he is righteous. We know that Jesus Christ is righteous just by reading the account of his life, by reading what he said, observing what he did, what he didn't do. It's on the basis of his righteous life that he became the only acceptable sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God, which is justly deserved for our sins.

Now, I want you to listen carefully. I'm gonna speak in some theological language about this and if you get the theology of this, you're going to get the benefit of strong unbreakable confidence and assurance about your salvation. So listen. It's only because Jesus Christ is perfectly righteous. That is to say, not one deviation from the righteous standard of God's eternal holiness. That is the only way that he could be the substitute for the sins of all those who believe, to take our sins upon himself to receive in his own body on the cross the just punishment that we deserved.

And it's only because of his perfect righteousness that God accepted that sacrifice as our atonement, our covering as the perfect and eternal covering for our sins. God punished Christ instead of us. And he accepted that sacrifice as payment for our sins. And it's only because of his perfect righteousness that God raised Jesus from the dead, which is the hope of resurrection that we all have. That one day we too will rise from the dead just as he did, the resurrection. That is also predicated based on the perfect righteousness of Christ.

And it's only because of his perfect righteousness that he is able to act as our advocate. He is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And Jesus, there, intercedes for each one of us by name according to the will of God. "We have," 1 John 2:1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous who is the propitiation for our sins." You know what he's praying about? You know the content of his prayers for us? He's praying that we will abide in him. He's praying that we, too, might walk in righteousness, that we might walk in holiness in a way that pleases the father just as he himself did.

So this is the, this is the result of all this magnificent theological truth, folks, when we practice righteousness, when we live and think and talk and plan and long for and pursue righteous obedience to the truth. We can have confidence that we have been spiritually reborn. "For," John 1:12, "to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Our actions, then, prove our parentage. Those who practice righteousness, departing from sin, repenting of sin, living in obedience to the holiness of God, they are those who have new affections, love of truth and righteousness, hatred of error and sin because they have been born again. They're new creatures in Christ. So abiding Christ means spiritual regeneration. You walk in righteousness, which is the evidence of a new nature being born again. And if you're born again, beloved, according to what John has written in the Gospel and his letters, spiritual regeneration, it's everything. It's absolutely everything.

Here's just a sampling of what John wrote on the theme of being born again. "Those who are born again," and only they, by

the way, "those who are born again, are able to see and enter the kingdom of God. John 3:3 and 5. Those who are born again are born from above they're born by the spirit of God and they possess a brand new nature. John 3:6, Those who are born again do not continue sinning. 1 John 3:9, "For God seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning because he's been born of God."

Oh, beloved, isn't that welcomed news? Those who are born again practice divine love. 1 John 4:7, "For love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God." Those who are born again continue believing. 1 John 5:1, Because "everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ," again, "has been born of God." Not only that, but those who have been born again, they also love everyone else who's been born again, 1 John 5:1.

And those who are born again are never overcome by the world. "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world." 1 John 5:4, And finally, those who are born again, 1 John 5:18, they escape the power of sin and the devil. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him." Abiding in Christ, it means spiritual

regeneration, folks. And spiritual regeneration means everything.

Fourth benefit of abiding in Christ, number four, abiding in Christ means familial identification. Familial identification. Notice 1 John 3:1, that word, see, that word, see there is really a, the way it's written in Greek is a, is an exclamation. It could be written, Behold, take note of, check this out. It's a, it's an exclamation of, of awe, of joy. And then when it's combined with the, this, what it's Greek, it's an interrogative adjective. It's, it's the word, what kind of. Or even often the phrase is, What country, like, where'd this come from. This is really the idea. It indicates that we are here, see, where did this come from?

John says we're to reflect here on something that is great, something glorious, something other-worldly wonderful. "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." And then the first part of verse 2, "Beloved, we are God's children now."

Incredible truths. Not only are we called the children of God

but we are in fact the children of God. John says the same thing repeatedly, which means we're to take his point emphatically.

We are God's children.

I love it that John here again uses the first-person plural. He inserts himself in there. He is not about to be left out and excluded from this number. He includes himself among the number who are God's children. It's not, "See what kind of the love the Father has given you that you should be called the children of God, but rather it's, "We have received the Father's love, we are called the children of God; and so we are." He's not gonna miss out on this incredible truth of belonging to God's family.

Now breaking that down just a little bit, first, I want you to notice three things here. First, this love, that we're to behold, that we're to take hold of, say, "Where did this come from? This love is an electing reconciling love. It's an electing, reconciling love. "See what kind of love the Father has given," not to everyone, but to us. That is to say, it's one kind of love and not another kind of love. This love goes beyond the general love of God, which is manifest in his common grace

to all of mankind. His kindness to the ungrateful and the evil,
Luke 6:35.

John is talking here about the special electing love of God manifest in his particular, his redeeming grace for his chosen people. It's a love that reconciled, that restored and made a relationship, which has made us, not everyone, but has made us to be his children. You ever stop and think of the fact that you are the elect of God from before the foundation of the world? And if you're rightly struck by that doctrine, you say, Why me? Why me?

I can answer the question. It's for the glory of his grace. He wanted to demonstrate how glorious his grace is, how patient he is with mankind, which means if he elected us, we're pretty bad stuff, aren't we? He wanted to demonstrate how great his electing, powerful, reconciling love is. So he chose us.

Second thing here: It's a justifying adopting love, kind of love. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God." Look, we're called children of

God. God has declared us children, which means he's declared us righteous, which is a judicial act that's called justification. God calls a thing what it is. He declares it to be so, and then he makes it so. That's how God created the world, right? He decreed it to be, and then he made it to be. That's how God justified us: declaring us to be, and then making us to be. Let there be, and it was.

So God declared us to be his children and, on that basis, having been justified he adopted us into his family. His electing reconciling love allowed for his justifying love, which is the basis of his adopting love. He's called us children, adopting us into his family, a family of redeemed people that gives continual praise and glory to his grace.

And thirdly, it's a certain secure kind of love. Certain and secure kind of love. He's called us the children of God, and therefore, we are children of God. And by stating it that way, John is here directing us to the certainty of God's Word. Trust his calling. Trust what he said. The assurance we find comes in resting wholly and completely in his Word. John wants our hope not to be fixed on our feelings, which change from day to day,

or really, frankly, from hour to hour. He wants our hope fixed instead on the certainty of his promise, which is grounded in his unchanging character, which speaks an unchanging word.

Listen, that puts the ground of assurance outside of ourselves, right? I am so thankful for that, aren't you? It's utterly hopeless to look inside of our ourselves for spiritual assurance. Think about Paul, the great Apostle Paul and he said in Romans 7, "Wretched man that I am." Look, when we, when look inside of ourselves, if you just look into the holy mirror of Scripture and take God's holiness seriously and then you look inside yourself, you're going to cry out with the Apostle Paul, "Oh, wretched man that I am," wretched woman that I am. "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" The answer follows directly and immediately after, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So the Apostle John joins here, he here joins the Apostle Paul in the same kind of gratitude, recognizing the surety and the certainty of our familial identification that is grounded outside of ourselves and in the Word of God. We are eternally

secure in the electing, reconciling, justifying, adopting love of God. Amen.

Two more points. We've seen that abiding in Christ means continual vivification, relational conviction, spiritual regeneration, familial identification. Here's a fifth benefit of abiding in Christ, number five, abiding in Christ means inevitable glorification. I love that word, inevitable glorification. Inevitable. That is 1 John 3:2, "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." This acknowledges what we all know. We are not yet in fact what we shall be. It reminds us of the great hope we have in our inevitable glorification.

I am so grateful for that, aren't you? I mean, if, if my current state of transformation is all the power that the Gospel has to transform, I am sunk. I am hopeless. In fact, it seems that the more I grow, the more I see the need to grow. The more I understand about sin, the more I see how deeply it is within. The more familiar I become with the Holy character of God, the more aware I am of how far short I have fallen from the

perfection of his holiness, again, “wretched man that I am, who will deliver from the body of this death?” Oh yeah, Christ.

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And John echoes the same thing here and even explains it a little bit further. He says, We know. That word *oida* again, pointing to facts we believe. It’s a Gospel that promises future glorification. When does it happen? “When he appears,” next phrase. It happens at the Second Coming. Again, we go back and remember the Apostle Paul who said, Philipians 3:20, “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it,” from heaven, “we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

So when Christ returns for us, he will transform us. Gone will be this lowly body, laden with sin nature. Forgotten will be the daily fight with the presence of sin, the habits of, of a fleshly mind. And in its place will be a new body like his glorious body, which bears “the image of the man of heaven,” 1 Corinthians 15:49. God will give us a new body just as he has chosen, which is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, but it is

raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but it's raised in power. It's sown in natural body, but it's raised a spiritual body, one that's impervious to sin, one that's unsusceptible to the weaknesses and temptations of sin.

With sin thus removed, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. That is to say, in other words, that which impedes our vision currently is the presence of our sin nature. The weakness of our sin-cursed body, the body of sin, which is subject to decay, but when he returns, that blessed transformation occurs, instantly we shall be like him. Beloved, the fulfillment of that promise of future of glorification, it is inevitable. It is going to happen. This is Gospel truth. You can bank on it, bet your life on it. Its fulfillment is guaranteed by the word of the unchanging God.

As the Apostle Paul, again he's written by the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:22 and following, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope

we were saved. Now hope that's seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

We come to a sixth and final benefit of abiding in Christ. Number six: Abiding in Christ means continual sanctification. Abiding in Christ means continual sanctification. Our first point was about continual life, continual vivification. And that continual vivification will not leave us unaffected. It cannot. All those who belong to God, they are progressively, continually sanctified, made holy. Praise be to God for that. Take a look at verse 3, "Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself just as He is pure."

That word, purifies, it's a ceremonial ritual cleansing kind of a term that, that speaks of the cleansing, the full washing, that must, you must go through, the high priest would go through before entering into the holy place. But here, it's spoken of, since we have a high priest, who's past through the Holy of Holies, past the veil into the Holy of Holies and right now he's seated at the right hand of God. Not in the types made by the hand of man in the temple in Jerusalem, but in the

eternal place, in heaven. He's passed through. And in him we pass through.

And so what remains is not for us to be ritually, ceremonially pure, but that type points us to the reality of a moral purification, becoming purified, like he is pure and holy. Biblically, hope is, is absolute certainty. It's the certainty of what we truly long for and that what we truly long for will certainly be fulfilled. That's hope. So if we long for glorification, if we long for the utter banishment of sin from our lives and for continuous unbroken perfection, of fellowship with him, of righteousness in our lives, then we strive for that now, don't we?

I really doubt a person who tells me that they long for purification and holiness when they don't strive for it now. I doubt that. Some Christians, though, who are fighting for holiness, they feel discouraged in their fight for purity, for holiness, for spiritual growth. I know. It seems hard now sometimes in this temporal life and existence to think and speak and act righteously. Sometimes the Christian life can feel like we're, we're running through a marsh, right? You kind of just

feel like you're getting stuck and bogged down and you got, trying to make. It's like one step forward, two steps backward.

But for those who are in Christ, for those who are abiding Christ, that feeling is really not a good indication of the facts, the reality. I should say that feelings are rarely a good indicator of reality. We need to base our feelings on settled conviction, which is informed by the absolute truth of God's unchanging Word. Don't go with feelings. Go with facts. We need to believe the word of the Holy Spirit. And he is the one who has told us in Philippians 2:13 that, "it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." And therefore, we know that the God "who began a good work in you," Philippians 1:6, he's the one who will "bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus."

So since we have such a rock-solid promise, we have every reason not to be discouraged, right? But instead, to keep pressing forward, to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because it's God who is at work within you both to will and to do for his good pleasure. If he's guaranteeing the outcome, well, let's get busy. Let's work. Let's press on,

right? Let's be aggressive about growth, aggressive about holiness in our lives. Let's press on to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Look, when you abide in Christ, when his Word abides in you, that life-giving Word will be the vitality flowing through your life changing, sanctifying you. You'll find within yourself the strengthening of holy affections, love for purity and truth, hatred of all that offends God. You'll find the things of this world growing strangely dim, especially as you see the clarity of God's character and purpose of Christ. When all that comes into sharp focus, you'll give yourself completely to truth and purity and holiness. The love of the Father, the love the saints.

So beloved, abide in Christ. Stay in his Word. Let his Word stay in you. To do that means you mortify sin. You abandon it. You let go of it. You leave it very far behind in order that you might have hands open and free that you can grasp the glorious truths of God, the promises of Christ and his Word, that you can hold those firmly. As John Bunyan said, "Sin will keep you from this book and this book will keep you from sin."

PILLAR OF —TRUTH—



If you abide in Christ and his Word, if his Word is at home in your heart, abiding in him means continual vivification, relational conviction, spiritual regeneration, familial identification. It means inevitable glorification. And it means continual sanctification. I hope you find those truths encouraging, and heartening, and edifying.