

Branch life of the Believer

Lesson 9

EXCEPT YE ABIDE

As the Branch Cannot Bear Fruit of Itself, Except It Abide In the Vine; No More Can Ye, Except Ye Abide in Me - John 15:4

What is the opposite of abiding in Christ? In what or whom would one be abiding if he were not abiding in Christ?

What is the evidence of abiding?

Of not abiding?

I. A Law

- a. The meaning of the word **except** expresses some indispensable condition, some inevitable law. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine. No more can ye, except ye abide in me."
- b. If the word **except** means what it says, then we must realize that there is but **one way** for the branch to bear fruit, there is no other possibility, it must abide in unbroken communion with the vine.
- c. In nature the branch teaches us this important lesson: Not of itself; but only with the vine as the **source** does the fruit materialize on the branch. This is a natural law and a spiritual law as well.
- d. It is such a wonderful privilege to be allowed to abide in the heavenly Vine; one might have thought it **needless** for Jesus to add the warning that we must abide in Him.
- e. Unfortunately, Christian history demonstrates, even from the earliest times, that this simple idea is a hard one to **grasp**. Gal 3:3 *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? KJV*

II. The Implication

- a. It is important to be reminded of this spiritual law because it is the natural tendency of the fleshly man to believe that he can achieve spiritual results through his own natural abilities and personal **efforts**.
- b. It seems impossible to us that we should live the Christian life without doing something. But, the simple truth that we need to learn is that spiritual results can only flow from the **Spirit**. John 15:5 *for without me ye can do nothing. KJV*
- c. Christ knows what is in man. He knows that a renunciation of **self** is necessary and so says: "Abide in me".
- d. He realizes how difficult it is for us to believe that actual, continuous abiding in Him is an **absolute** necessity. How unnatural it is for the believer to let go of the notion that he must **do** something.
- e. Christ on the other hand, seeks to impress upon believers this **truth**: *Not of itself* can the branch bear fruit; *except it abide*, it cannot bear fruit. "No more can ye, except ye abide in me."
- f. This is a spiritual imperative. We must, as exclusively, and manifestly, and unceasingly, and absolutely, as the branch abides in the vine, be equally **given up** to find our whole life in Christ alone.
- g. The **except ye abide** is as universal as the **except it abide**. The language allows for **no** exception or modification. The branch must abide and just as certainly we must abide.
- h. If we are to be a true branch, if we are to bear fruit, if we are to be what Christ as Vine wants us to be, our whole existence must be as exclusively **devoted** to abiding in Him, as that of the natural branch is to abiding in its vine.

III. Learning How To Abide

- a. Let us learn the lesson. Abiding is in part an act of the conscious **will**. There is no such thing as an unconscious act of the will. Only by a volitional surrender to our sovereign Lord do we move toward abiding in Him.
- b. Just as loving the Lord involves the whole heart so too, **complete** abiding also involves the whole heart. Matt 22:37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. KJV*
- c. As there are **degrees** in seeking and serving God; for example, "not with a perfect heart," or "with the whole heart," so there may be degrees in abiding.
- d. In regeneration the divine life enters us, but does not all at once **master** and fill our whole being. This comes over time as we learn Christ, obey Him and trust Him completely. Ps 56:3-4 *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.⁴ In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. KJV*
- e. There is unspeakable danger in our not giving ourselves with our whole heart to abide in Him. The danger is one of falling into mediocrity in our relationship with Christ and accepting that mediocrity as the **norm**.
- f. With mediocrity as the norm, we then come to believe that mere **superficial** intellectual commitment is all that is called for in the exercise of our Christian faith.

Branch life of the Believer

Lesson 9

EXCEPT YE ABIDE

As the Branch Cannot Bear Fruit of Itself, Except It Abide In the Vine; No More Can Ye, Except Ye Abide in Me - John 15:4

- g. This mindset leaves Christ "out there somewhere" rather than seated on the throne of one's heart. This, in essence, produces a lukewarm relationship with Christ and is roundly condemned Him. Rev 3:14 *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. KJV*
- h. We are duly warned that this type of remote, impersonal, relationship is far removed from the idea expressed by Jesus when He instructed His disciples to abide in Him.
- i. Another danger that entraps many a believer is that of our giving ones self to work for God, and to bear fruit for Him, without demonstrating any true abiding. This is futile and a wasted effort.
- j. When one thinks of ones self as working "for God" this often means that persons' activity flows from their own idea of what God would have them do. I.E. the Crusades. This is not abiding.
- k. True abiding involves the wholehearted losing of oneself in Christ and His life. It is just the opposite of self-directed service for God. Matt 10:39 *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. KJV*
- l. It is when we presume that we may accomplish spiritual results by carnal efforts that we burden ourselves with a life of "dead works". This leads us to expect that Christ is then well-pleased by our efforts in His behalf. Matt 7:22-23 *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. KJV*
- m. We must allow the words, "not of itself," "except it abide," to do their work of searching and exposing, of pruning and cleansing, all that there is of self-will and self-confidence in our life.
- n. As His words search our hearts we will be delivered from this great evil, and be prepared for His teaching. Then only will we receive the full meaning of the word in us: "Abide in me, and I in you."

IV. The Remedy

- a. Our blessed Lord desires to call us away from ourselves and away from our own strength, to Himself and His strength. Matt 11:28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. KJV*
- b. Let us accept the warning, and turn with great fear and self-distrust to Him to do His work in us. Col 3:3 *your life is hid with Christ in God. KJV*
- c. That life that He gives is a heavenly mystery, hid from the wise even among Christians, and revealed unto babes.
- d. The childlike spirit learns that life is given from Heaven every day and every moment to the soul that accepts the teaching: "not of itself," "except it abide," and seeks its all in the Vine.
- e. Abiding in the Vine then comes to be nothing neither more nor less than the restful surrender of the soul to let Christ have all and work all, as completely as in nature the branch knows and seeks nothing but the vine.

V. Application

- a. If abiding is a conditional state, then it must also be possible to not abide. What experiential evidence (thoughts, words, deeds) would suggest that you are not abiding?
- b. Contrast those evidences with what you would experience if you were in the state of abiding in Christ.
- c. Abide in Me. I have heard, my Lord, that with every command, Thou also givest the power to obey. With Thy "rise and walk," the lame man leaped, I accept Thy word, "Abide in me," as a word of power, that gives power, and even now I say, Yea, Lord, I will, I do abide in Thee.