

Lesson 16: IF YE ABIDE

If Ye Abide in Me, and My Words, Abide in You, Ask Whatsoever Ye Will, and it Shall be Done Unto You - John 15:7

I. Introduction

- a. The reason the Vine and its branches are such a true parable of the Christian life is that all nature has **one** source and that which has breath breathes as a function of the Spirit that created it. Ps 104:29-30 *Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. KJV*
- b. The plant world was created to be to man an **object lesson** teaching him his entire dependence upon God, as well as his security within that dependence.
- c. He that clothes the lilies will much more clothe us. He that gives the trees and the vines their beauty and their fruits, making each what He meant it to be, will much more certainly **make us** what He would have us to be. Matt 6:28-29 *And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. KJV*
- d. The only difference is what God works in the trees is by a power of which they are not conscious. He desires to **work in us** with our conscious consent.
- e. This points out the nobility of man, that he has a **will** that can cooperate with God in understanding and approving and accepting what He offers to do. We cooperate with Him in our abiding in Him.
- f. The key to comprehending this operation which results in abiding in the believer is to first apprehend the fact that the believer (by himself) lacks the necessary **enablement** to abide. John 15:5 *"Without me you can do nothing"*.
- g. Therefore, we must understand that the believer can no more merely **will himself** to abide in Christ than can a natural branch will itself to be a 2X4.
- h. The missing ingredient is an **endowment** by the Spirit that works grace into the will of the believer.

II. Discovering the Power Behind Abiding

- a. *If ye abide*-Here is the **difference** between the branch of the natural and the branch of the spiritual Vine. Natural plant life abides by force of its nature: it can only do as its nature allows.
- b. The Spiritual branch however, abides, not by **force of will**, but by a divine power given to the consent of the will. This is grace in action. Eph 3:20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, KJV*
- c. While abiding is, at least in part, an act of the will of the individual believer, this act is subsequent to the enablement of the Spirit who works into the will a **special grace** which brings about true abiding. Phil 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. KJV*
- d. Such is the wonderful **provision** God has made that, what the power of nature does in the one case, the power of grace will do in the other. The branch can abide in the Vine because it is enabled to do so.
- e. To understand this meaning of the word grace as an **active**, requisite, power that enables abiding we must delve into how the word is used.

III. The Connection Between Grace & Abiding

- a. The first meaning of the word *charis* is "**a gift**." The reference to it in the 1 Corinthian 16 text is the money and worldly goods given by the Corinthians to the Jerusalemites. 1 Cor 16:3 *And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. KJV*
- b. A second meaning refers to the **benefit received** by the Corinthians from a visit by Paul. 2 Cor 1:15 *And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; KJV*
- c. By fusing together these two ordinary meanings we can see that grace may not only be a gift received but also incorporates the **benefit** derived from that gift.
- d. To take this one step further, in a more spiritual sense *charis* is used to denote the **endowment** for an office in the church, without this endowment the service is empty and meaningless. Eph 4:7 *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. KJV*
- e. Service without the gift of grace to enable it is man's **carnal effort** and is disapproved by God. 1 Peter 4:10 *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. KJV*
- f. Taking this one step further we see that a grace received, is in a spiritual sense, an endowment with which the believer is especially **favored**. 1 Cor 1:4-7 *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: KJV*
- g. When God favors man by the endowment of some grace, it differs from man's endowment in that it cannot be conceived of as **inactive**. What God bestows upon man for His purposes accomplishes His design.
- h. Therefore, if God has a favorable "thought" toward a man, it of necessity involves the **reception** of some blessing by that man.
- i. We see this for example, in the phrase "God **looked** upon" which is one of the most common Biblical paraphrases for "bestowed a blessing." Deut 26:7-8 *the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt KJV*

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- j. When "God favors" one there exists an **active power**, and as *charis* denotes, both the gift and the benefit received are connected with the power to use them as designed by God.
- k. God gives grace enabling the recipient to **respond** in some beneficial way. Paul makes this use very clear where he says, 1 Cor 15:10 "*not I, but the grace of God which was with me*" *labored more abundantly than they all*:
- l. Grace is something that **labors**. We see this idea also in 2 Cor 12:9, "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness*";
- m. Here again, Paul receives the active power **enabling** him (grace) to go on in the circumstance from which he sought to be delivered.
- n. Grace is the **operative** power by which the will of man consents and yields to the commands of God. Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: KJV
- o. Thus it should be clear that grace supplied by God and received by the believer is an **essential** ingredient in any obedience to God's command. Abiding in Christ is one such case.
- p. If **abiding** in Christ is only accomplished by grace, how much more is that grace required when it comes to **shaping** the desires for which we continually pray.

IV. The Connection Between Abiding and Answered Prayer

- a. As dependent upon grace as the believer is for his abiding, he is **equally** dependent upon his abiding for the answer to prayer. *If ye abide in me...ask whatsoever ye will*
- b. If we are to live a true prayer life, with the love and the power and the experience of prayer marking it, then the believer must be abiding, for this is the **condition** placed upon answered prayer.
- c. And if we abide, there need be no question about the **liberty** of asking what we will, and the certainty of its being done. There is however, the one condition: "If ye abide in me."
- d. Jesus said "If my words abide in you"-that means not only in meditation and in memory, but also as evidenced by the grace received for our living out of Christ. This is also called **transformation**.
- e. As His words enter into our will and our being (**both** spiritually and psychologically), they begin to constitute our life and we are transformed into His image and likeness.
- f. The true test is if we are transformed in character into His likeness, and we **become** what those words speak and mean-then we may ask what ye will and it shall be done unto us.
- g. Then in effect our words to God in prayer will be the **fruit of Christ** and will prove that His words are living in us and are shaping our desires. This too reflects an operation of grace in the believer.
- h. The key ingredient is that we must be wholly **occupied** with Jesus. Like the branch in the vine, we must sink the roots of our being in faith and love and obedience deep down into Him.
- i. We must come away out of every **other** place to abide here. Give up everything for the inconceivable privilege of being a branch on earth glorifying the Son of God in Heaven.
- j. However, we must be cautioned: We must not be **occupied** with the abiding; but, be occupied with Christ! He will hold you, He will keep you abiding in Him. He will abide in you.
- k. Thus, as grace makes abiding possible, this abiding transforms us and also makes answered prayer a certainty. All of this is **of God, for God and to God**.

V. Application

- a. Where God gives grace it is effective in bringing about His desires. The Christian life is only possible through grace: The grace to receive it, the grace to live it, the grace to continue in it and the grace which transforms.
- b. What evidence do you have of the grace of God operating in your daily life?
- c. Are you more occupied with abiding or more occupied with Christ?