

## **“Abide in My Love”**

**Introduction:** (Read John 15:9-17) Abiding in Jesus, as Sinclair Ferguson wrote, speaks of union with Christ - “This – our union with Christ – is the heartbeat of the Christian life, and here, in John 15, Jesus is helping His disciples to understand what it means. He had already begun to do this by explaining that when His Spirit came to indwell them, they would experience an even more intimate relationship with Him: they would be united to Him by a mutual indwelling (‘you in me, and I in you,’ John 14:20).” (Lessons from the Upper Room,” pg. 108). This passage takes us deeper into the call and privilege of our mutual indwelling with the Father and the Son by the Spirit – the call to “abide” in Jesus.

**Jesus Teaches That to Abide in Him and He in Us is to “Abide” in His Love – 15:9-11 – Note:** Up to this point Jesus has exhorted the disciples/us – “Abide in me *and I in you*” v.4; “The one who abides in me *and I in him...*” v.5; “If you abide in me *and my words remain in you...*” v.7. In this section – 15:9-17 - Jesus begins by re-stating the exhortation with “*Abide in my love...*” v.9b. He transitions to this change in wording by introducing it all with a declaration of *His love for His disciples/for us!!*

- 15:9a – Jesus re-introduces God’s love for us/the disciples in the context our intimate relationship of mutual indwelling with the Father and the Son. It is the indwelling Spirit (cf. 14:15-17, 20) that we actually come to experience *the love of the Father for Jesus, in Jesus’ love for us* (cf. 14:21, 23)

**Note:** Compare the language of John 17:20-23, 26 as we move forward in this discussion – corporate unity tied to shared life of mutual indwelling – vs.20-21; Jesus makes the connection between glory, unity and mutual indwelling – vs.22-23 – notice that here Jesus makes it clear that it is in this mutual indwelling - by the Spirit – that we experience the Father’s love for Jesus in Jesus’ love for us (cf. v.23); Jesus closes His prayer with His desire for us to be with Him in His glory and His commitment to continue to make the Father known to us so that we the Father’s love for Jesus may be in us by His dwelling in us – Christ in us (cf. v.26).

- 15:9b – notice that in this text Jesus shifts the imperative of 15:4, 5, 7 of *μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί, καὶ γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν* to 15:9 - *μείνατε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐμῇ*. We are to understand that to abide in Jesus is to abide in His love. The strength of this is seen in a review of the language.

Note: There is a strong connection between the language of 14:2, 23 and the verb “abide” or “remain” – John 15 μένω is used 11 times – 10 times in 15:4-10 and once in 15:16 - (to abide or live or dwell or remain) which is a verb form related to the noun in John 14:2, 23 of μονή - (room or place or place of dwelling or abiding).

We are called upon to “abide in” Jesus’ love for us (15:9b). To make it our place of “abiding” – our home, to live there, as it were. This is a blessed place to abide or to “live.” How are we to do that? We are provided the answer in 15:10. In the previous 3 times Jesus spoke of abiding in Him

followed by either “and I in you” or “and my words in you” – notice the fuller statement in 15:10.

- 15:10 – Notice the correlation between Jesus abiding in us (vs.4-5), letting Jesus’ words “abide in” us (v.7) and obedience to His commands as the condition of our abiding in His love (v.10). It is by obeying Jesus’ commands that we will remain/abide or “live” in Jesus’ love. Notice that He gives us His commands or His words so that we can live in – make His love home, His love as our living space (cf. 14:2) and He and His Father can make their “home” with/in us (cf. 14:23).

This is a “holy love” in which we are called to abide as seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (cf. 1 John 5:1-3). His commands are His gift to us for an ongoing life in intimacy with Him. There is an aspect of the Bible’s teaching on the nature of God which is often referred to as the “simplicity of God.” What it means is that, all that God is, He is all of the time. John Mahoney described it this way,

“God is ‘simple.’ He is also complex, but each attribute describes God’s entire complexity, not just part of it. Thus, God is holy, only holy, all holy, while being simultaneously love, only love, all love.” (from his article “Love in the Triune Community,” in the book “The Love of God,” pg. 99)

We cannot say and understand that “God is love” unless we know that He never is love apart from His holiness or vice versa. In other words God’s love for us is “holy-love” as is clear by the cross. What that means to “abide in” Jesus’ love is at the same time a pursuit of holiness OR as He says, to keep His commands. This takes us back to what Ferguson and Whitney said – quoted last week *with the qualifier that it is our experience of His love for us and our joy in His love that sends us to His Word (cf. 1 John 5:3).*

**Sinclair Ferguson makes this point well when he writes,** “So, if you want to dwell in Christ, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. Leave no room in your life locked, no cupboard door closed to it. Let it bring light into your mind; let it warm your affections for Christ; let it subdue your will to His. The Word of Christ is the instrument of Christ, used by the Spirit of Christ, (to give life), to nurture union with Christ and to transform us into the image of Christ.” (Ferguson, 114).

**If this is true** – listen to Donald Whitney as he writes about the state of the church in the context of talking about the discipline of Bible intake – citing a 1990 *USA Today* poll he says that – at that time – only 11% of Americans read the Bible daily and more than half read it less than once a month or never at all. Among professing “Born Again” Christians only 18% read it daily (less than 2 in 10) and 23% (almost 1 in 4) never read it. He then noted that based on recorded Bible Readings – like perhaps we have in “Bible.Is” or “Bible Gateway – it takes about 71 hours to read the Bible cover to cover (Donald Whitney, “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life,” pgs. 27-29).

He then becomes the example of such obedience or profound “abiding” when He tells us that He, as the incarnate Son, abides in – makes the love of the Father His living space, space of life by obeying His Father’s commands – letting His Father’s words abide in Him (cf. 14:30-31). Could it be that Jesus was “abiding” or “living” in the Father’s love profoundly at the cross (cf. John 10:17)?

- If there is any doubt of this being His grace to us see 15:11 – the joy that He knows in abiding/living in the Father’s love (**14:30-31**; also 12:27-28; cf. **Hebrews 12:1-2**) is ours to be had in fullness – by the experience of life lived in the space of *His love*.

***Jesus Repeats the “New Command” as the Defining “Command” for All Who Would Abide in His Love – All who Would Experience the Mutual Indwelling of the Father and the Son by the Spirit (cf. 14:23) – Namely That We Be Like Him in Our love for One Another – 15:12-17*** – Remember that in 13:34-35, after Jesus predicted His betrayal and Judas had left the gathering He announced that the time had come for the Son of Man to be glorified and God to be glorified in Him. He restated His need to go away to a place that they could not join Him at that time. It was in that context, at that critical moment, that Jesus gave them the “New Command” essentially passing on to them the integrity of the Gospel hope among themselves and its witness to the world based in their Christ-like love for one another.

- 15:12-14 – Here “The New Command” of 13:34 is reiterated. The “**new**” of this command to love one another is seen in the precedent for this love established by Jesus (cf. the old call in the law to love - Leviticus 19:18; the new in the gospel - 13:34; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11). We are to love one another as He has loved us (cf. 1 John 4:10-11; Ephesians 5:2).

**v.13** - The character of the love of Jesus for us - the love we are to have for one another - is inherently self-sacrificial. Jesus gave His life for us – we who are called by Him “my friends.”

**v.14** – Jesus’ love for us makes us His friends. ***This love for us is the basis of “election” and precedes our obedience and is seen/proven in our obedience*** (cf. v.16; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:4-6). Therefore our obedience is linked to and reflective of His prior love for us. I want you to see from this that this “obedience” to His commands is all tied up in the fact that we have been made alive by His Spirit who lives in us and ultimately produces the life of Jesus in us – He/the Spirit effects the mutual indwelling which is transforming. This will reflect the character of God among us corporately.

- 15:15 – This is an amazing change in our relational status with the Lord!!! The honor Jesus is conferring on His disciples (to include you and me) is amazing, as seen in its simple description formerly servants (δοῦλος) and now – by His choosing - friends (φίλος). The word φίλος is an adjective connoting special affection describing one who is beloved or dear. It’s used as a substantive picturing “**one who is on intimate terms or in close association with another**” (BDAG electronic).

Formerly servants but no longer (οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους) – Why? Because the relationship has changed at its heart (ὅτι ὁ δοῦλος οὐκ οἶδεν τί ποιεῖ αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος). But you *I have called* – I now call friends (ὑμᾶς δὲ εἴρηκα φίλους). Why? What makes the difference? I have made you are part of the love and life of God – part of my family as seen in the trust I have afforded you (ὅτι πάντα ἃ ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐγνώρισα ὑμῖν). The things the Father has entrusted to me – given me – I have given you as a trust!! This is the “words” of Jesus mentioned in 15:7 – representing an ongoing work of the Spirit (relationship work – cf. 15:26-27; 16:12-15; **17:6, 26; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16** – esp. vs.6-16; also **Hebrews 2:10-12**).

- 15:16-17 – v.16a – the electing love of God precedes and is the cause of our love for Jesus and our obedience to His word. That electing love is on display in our love for one another – and in some ways for our world – with the same love with which Jesus loves us on display on the cross (1 John 3:16; 4:10-21 – esp. 10, 19). v.16b – He chose us in love that we might bear fruit that “remains/abides”).

v.17 – such fruit is seen most profoundly in a group of believers that functions as the family of God – Jesus our brother and His Father as our Father – the Spirit is the One who binds us together in our Father’s love!! Mahoney said it this way,

“Communion of the saints is therefore both horizontal (fellowship among believers) and vertical (fellowship with the Trinity). The love between members of Christ’s body is intra-Trinitarian. It is the actual love of the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father, and the Holy Spirit for both.” (cf. John 15:9; 17:20-26).

“Union with the divine sets the stage for the interpenetration of triune love in Christ’s church.” (Ibid., pgs. 98 & 114 respectively)

There is a power to the witness of such “holy-love” within the body that has to be among the most precious and powerful of the fruit it bears. Morgan and McLendon quoting Bryan Chapell in reference to Ephesians 3:9-10 – “...the uniting of sinners in the body of Christ makes the grace of God more brilliant – even to the hosts of heaven. By our unity in Christ’s body, the church, we are preaching to the angels about the power, wisdom, and glory of God who made us...This is the apex of Paul’s thought about the church...Here we learn that the church is intended not only to transform the world but also to transfix heaven.”

Close with Ephesians 3:14-21!!