

# Abide in God by His Spirit

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 20 September 2009

Preacher: Alex Cowie

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well now let's turn to 1st John and chapter 4. And it's a wee while since we were looking at 1st John, but in the course of looking at verses 13 and 14 we'll maybe just refer back to some of what we've come through on our way to this section today.
- Verses 13 and 14. And by this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit.
- And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world.
- Our subject today in 1st John 4.13-14 is Abide in God by his Spirit.
- And there are things that flow out from abiding in God which we will look at. We'll look at first of all what it is to abide in God and then to abide in love and thirdly to abide in the truth.
- [ 1 : 1 4 ] And this is all about being able to identify where a person's interest lies.
- Now I have to say that I'm not at all a fan of Strictly Come Dancing and I'm watching all of you here because I'm watching to see whose face moves and tells me they have a wee peep at that programme.
- Well I'm not really a fan of it at all. But it's clear to see that the professionals who operate on that both male and female are decidedly committed to their profession.
- It's absolutely evident from not only what they do but what they say their whole life is absorbed in that profession.
- And that can be seen in all sorts of ways with people where their commitment lies. It can be seen in people who are professional in sports.
- [ 2 : 2 1 ] We're inundated with all sorts of sports. And you can see the people who are living for their sport. Now that doesn't mean there are no Christians in sport.
- I'm not saying that. But you can see those whose life for me to live is football or golf. No sideways reference to our golfers here by the way.
- But it's for me to live is that sport. That's the thing. You can see where their commitment lies. And the subject that's before us today, abiding in God, is about being able to detect where our interest lies with reference to God himself.
- John is taking us into something far deeper than just the commitment that a person has to a sport or a hobby or work or whatever.
- He's taking us into the commitment of a person to God if it's there at all. If it's there in a big way, in a little way or if it's not at all there.
- [ 3 : 3 0 ] He wants us to think about this wonderful aspect of human experience of reality, of abiding in God, of being in a living relationship with him.
- And he shows us in the text, as I hope we'll see, that you can detect where there is real commitment. Not commitment to the church, though that's good in its own place.
- But commitment to the Lord himself. After all, discipleship, Christian discipleship, is commitment to following Jesus.

And it's far more than just saying, I was converted at such and such a time. It's far more than simply knowing the doctrines of the gospel, though that is good in itself.

It is not about abiding in God. It's not about a living relationship to God that can be detected, not only by others, but by ourselves.

[ 4 : 37 ] And John's concern here is to help us to see from his teaching how true love for God has its outworking in human experience.

How it is imaged forth. Go back to verse 12. You see, if we love one another, God abides in us. And his love has been perfected in us.

Don't suppose you remember when we were looking at this. But the idea of perfected is that it is imaged forth. It's there in fullness and it is projected from within.

It is imaged forth. So, we'll look at that in its own place. The second thing he wants us to consider is how those indwelt by the Spirit regard the truth of God.

And so we come more particularly then to, first of all, abiding in God. And what I want to do with this first point is to look at it from the Old Testament background and then look at it in the New Testament in the light of New Testament teaching.

[ 5 : 50 ] First of all, Old Testament background on abiding in God. And the first thing we notice about this is that God himself said to Israel, I will dwell among you.

I will be your God. And the whole notion there is simply that God dwelt among, he dwelt with his people.

And sometimes in reading theology or in listening to preaching, you get the impression from some people that the Spirit of God wasn't really in or among the people.

It's just that in an outward way God was there. But that is not the Bible's teaching at all. The Spirit of God necessarily indwelt the elect in Israel.

And there are many ways of illustrating that and highlighting it. Paul himself distinguishes between those who are Israel and those who are of Israel.

[ 6 : 59 ] Those who are ethnically Israelites or Jews. And those who are really and truly spiritually the elect of God. The true Israel of God.

It is of course true to say that the fullness of the ministry of the Spirit was, it had a yet to be aspect to it.

It needed to wait for the completion of Christ's work on earth. And that's why the New Testament is so full of teaching concerning the Holy Spirit coming.

And it's clear that there is a new dynamic manner of coming in which he glorifies the exalted Christ, both in Jewish and Gentile believers.

We're taken into a more dynamic experience of the ministry of the Spirit in the New Testament period. That was foretold.

[ 7 : 59 ] It's not that the Old Testament believers, the Jewish believers, didn't know. No, it was taught by the prophets. There was a yet to be-ness in the ministry of the Spirit.

And that's why, you remember, Joel's prophecy began to be fulfilled at the first Pentecost following Jesus' ascension to heaven.

He told them to wait for the promise of the Father, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit. And you see in the prophets, you can, for example, look at Jeremiah 32 from verse 38 following, or Ezekiel 36 verse 26 through the next few verses.

These are class references to the teaching about the yet-to-be ministry of the Holy Spirit. That's not saying he wasn't dwelling in the people of God, in the elect of God.

He was. The prophets themselves spoke by the Spirit who indwelt them. Ezekiel 37 from verse 27, another area where that teaching of God, not only among the people, but in his people.

[ 9 : 21 ] There was something that was true then, but something that would come to its fullness with the coming of the Spirit following Jesus' ascension.

And you find that Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 16 actually quotes from the Old Testament in this way. I will dwell in them, I will be with them, they shall be my people, I will be their God.

And so on. And if we wind back to Jesus' own ministry, Jesus had much to say about the coming of Father and Son and Holy Spirit to indwell believers.

We were looking at that a month or two ago. And here John stresses that there is to be a personal response on the part of those who believe they are believers to maintaining their spiritual communion with God.

Otherwise the imperative is meaningless. Abide in me, said Jesus. If you abide in me, you will bring forth fruit and so on.

[ 10 : 46 ] Spiritual communion with God in Christ was not to be taken for granted by the apostolic church and is not to be taken for granted by us.

It is something we are to endeavor to maintain by grace. And we need to lay this to heart. It is something God has put in our way to maintain our communion with the Lord himself.

We are going to look secondly at what it is to abide in love. And Jude, in his little letter, his one chapter letter in verse 21, says, Keep yourselves in the love of God.

That is, put upon those who profess the Lord this important duty to maintain their life in relation to God.

And so we are to abide in him by the Spirit he has given. We will look at that a little bit more fully shortly. And so the second thing we want to highlight here is abiding in love.

[ 12 : 01 ] Now as we have noted already, True love for God is seen when it is expressed firstly to the household of faith.

Verse 12 we have already quoted from. If we love one another, If we love one another, God abides in us. See that? God abides in us if we love one another.

And his love has been perfected in us. It is functioning in such a way that it is having evidence in the world around us.

It is touching people's lives. Firstly, the household of faith. And what John does for us here is, He shows us that expressing genuine Christian love, In the way that it shows, Is the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

You see it there in the passage. By this we know that we abide in him, And he in us, Because he has given us of his Spirit.

[ 13 : 13 ] And the abiding has to do not only with spiritual communion with him, But love for him that is expressed, In love for the household of faith.

And that takes us back to the source of that love. Several times as I was reading in 1 John, I wanted to stop and say, Now remember, That the word for love here, Is a word that is uniquely Christian, Or, The Saviour and the Apostles gave it a Christian meaning.

That's why in the old version, The authorised version, You have charity. They wanted to distinguish, They wanted to distinguish that love, That was of God, From love that was in the world around.

And they used the word charity. Agape is the word behind this. And it is that love which is divine in its origin, And is given to the believer, Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Is a fruit of the Spirit, Or it is a segment of the fruit, Of the Spirit.

He pours it forth, Into the Christian believer's heart. Romans 5, And verse 5 tells us that very thing. So that the love that the Christian, Has to live with, Is God like in nature.

[ 14 : 41 ] Is God like in nature. Is God like in nature. And it is the fruit of the Spirit's work in us. It's important therefore to think about how we project this love, How it operates in our experience.

If it is the fruit of the regenerating work of the Spirit of God, If it is the result of him, Implanting that divine seed in us, So to speak.

So that we can love with the love that's of God, Then it matters that we are looking for that. Not in others in a censorious way, But in ourselves.

It matters. And you see, This love that he's talking about here, Enables the believer to know, That he has passed from death to life.

You go back, To that famous reference, In 1 John 3 then. We know that we have passed from death to life, Because we love the brethren.

[ 15 : 52 ] Verse 14 We know it. It's something we can dare to say we know. We know we love them, Because of the fact that God has given us a love for them.

We love them as those who are gods. We belong to them. And the Spirit enables us to understand that.

And he, in his own way, Gives us some assurance, If we will but take it, That we know that we have passed from death to life, Because we love the Lord's people.

Now, it has to be said in this connection, That the love that he's talking about here, Is no mere feeling. It's no mere feeling. We mustn't leave it, At a good feeling we have about this believer, Or that believer.

It must have a practical outworking. And that practical outworking, Must bear first and foremostly, On the Lord's people.

[ 17 : 01 ] And when it does, We are allowed to say, This is the love of God in my heart, Operating as it should. It's what happens, Wherever the Spirit of God dwells.

There's an old preacher, Who was in the UF church, Back at the turn of the century, His name is Watson. And he says, He says, A change has come over us, Which we did not make.

A gift has reached us, Which must have come to us, From without.

And what he's doing there, Is he's saying, Something to us, That kind of love, Wherewith we love the brethren, Is not natural to us.

A change, Has come over us, Which we did not make. Now if you're really thinking about this, It should be giving you, Some measure of assurance from God.

[ 18 : 14 ] What we're saying is, That the love, Wherewith we love the brethren, Is a love that is of God. A change came over us, Which we didn't make.

A gift, Has reached us, Which must have come to us, From without. He has poured forth, The Holy Spirit into our hearts.

That's why we love the way we do. So having this Christ-like love for others, We ought to see, A clearly marked sign, In ourselves, That God himself, Has given us.

And, Precisely that God has given us, His Spirit. And, He brings that out, We've looked at that already, In the passage.

This is the, The manifestation, Of the love that is of God, In the believer's heart. It is its external expression, And because the Spirit, Dwells in us.

[ 19 : 28 ] And, It's not enough for us to say, Well yes, You know, I, But the Spirit works secretly, Doesn't be in the heart. But John is saying, When the Spirit is there, The evidence will be there too.

It will be seen. And it must, Needs be seen. And of course, This is profoundly challenging. It must be seen, In the way we treat each other. It must be seen, In the way we speak, About, And to each other.

It, It must be, Easy to, To, To detect, That it's there. And that is, As I say, Profoundly challenging. When you think about, The things that we, Sometimes say, And the tone we use, And so on.

We, We cut across, The reality of the love of God. We fail, We come short. How unwilling, We can sometimes be, To, To be forgiving.

Which is at the heart, Of being a Christian. How, We can fall down, In overlooking, What people do for us, In a positive way.

[ 20 : 42 ] We, We fail to record thanks to them. We are unloving, In that respect. We take wrong attitudes. We, We do unjustly.

We, We perhaps, Deal in a way, That is not consistent, With godliness. And all these things, Run against, The love, That the Christian, Ought to express, Show forth.

And we are challenged, By this. To abide in this love, That is emphatically, Of God, And of his spirit. So that we will go on, That we will really go on, In a way that, That shows that, The love of god, Is in our hearts.

And, We don't need to think, Very far laterally here, To, To think about, The difficult nature of that, Where, A whist, Get away from next door. And, We've got to think about, How we express, Love for brethren, Albeit estranged brethren.

How we, Really express it. There's no end of, Practical illustrations, In this. But the bottom line, Is that the bible, Says that, Sure as the love of god, Abides in us, It will never die, It will never be quenched, Nothing, Will quench it.

[ 22 : 01 ] No opposition to it, Will quench it. We may be irritated, We may be frustrated, But, What other christians do, But, The love of god, Is to abide in us, And we are to maintain, The reality of its expression, In our lives.

Because, You see, It indicates, That we really have, Passed from death to life, It really indicates, To us, That the spirit of god, Dwells in us, And that must be, Important, To you and me.

May he confirm, To us in his own way then, From his word, That his love, Is in our hearts, And that we can, Not only say it, But know it, As from him.

Abiding in god, The place of the spirit, In that. Abiding in love, The place of the spirit, In that too. And thirdly, Abiding in the truth, Verse 14, And we have seen, And testified, That the father, Has sent the son, As saviour, Of the world.

Abiding in the truth, Now I agree, Now I agree, If you are thinking it, That it may not be, Immediately apparent, That verse 14, Is saying, Anything to us, About abiding, In the truth, But the easiest way, To see it, Is to take the context, And to notice, The flow of thought, From verse 12, We could go back, Beyond that, But just from verse 12, No one has seen, God, At any time, If we, Love one another, God abides, In us, And his love, Has been perfected, In us, In other words, Truth, Has its expression, In the life, Verse 13, By this we know, That we abide in him, Because he has given us, Of his spirit, And his spirit,

[ 24 : 18 ] Is first and foremostly, The spirit, Of truth, He shall lead you, Into all the truth, Said our saviour, It is the role, Of the abiding spirit, Of God, To establish, The truth, In our hearts, The truth of the gospel, The truth of God, And to enable us, To, To live it, To assert it, To maintain it, To defend it, To use the words, Of the confession, Think for a moment, About the truth of God, That's what the gospel is, The good news, It's his, And the spirit, Uses that word, To bring us, To Jesus, That's how we discover, We're sinners, We accept God's verdict, And not man's, We accept our need, Of repentance, And faith, And we are persuaded, By the spirit of truth,

That God's verdict, Is right, And just, And good, How on earth, Can a person say, In all honesty, I deserve to be cast, Into the lowest hell, To be separated, From God forever, How can anybody say that, Except, That the spirit of God, Has convicted that person, That it's true, You would need to be mad, To say that, Hand on heart, About yourself, Except that the spirit of God, Convicted you, I don't say converted, But convicted you, And settled you, That that was true, He is a spirit, Who convinces us, Of the truth of God, And that truth, Of God, Is what God's spirit, Uses, Not only to convict us, But to convert us, All together, To Christ, Faith comes, By hearing Romans, 10 verse 17, And hearing by the word of God,

Peter says in his letter, You were born again, By an incorruptible seed, Of the living, And abiding, Word of God, That's how it comes about, 1 Peter 1, 23, That's how it comes about, That you are, Born again, By the word of God, Which the spirit of God, Uses, And we are to abide in that, Surely there's a logic in this, If the word of God, Was used by the spirit of God, To bring us to the foot of the cross, To Jesus, The word of God, Must be, Oh so precious to us, My very first sermon, Here, Was, 1 Thessalonians, 1 verse 5, Paul's words, Our gospel came to you, Not, In word only,

But in the Holy Spirit, In power, And in much assurance, That's what he said, To the Thessalonians, It wasn't just, Word only, But in the power, Of the spirit, Who, Had that word, Penned at the first, In 2nd Thessalonians, Chapter 1, Paul draws a distinction, Between those, Who will be lost eternally, And those who will be blessed eternally, And he boils it down to this, He says that those, Who will be lost eternally, Did not receive, The love of the truth, That they might be saved, And surely the love of the truth, Is to abide in it, And to let it influence our lives, To love it, To look after it, As a precious possession,

From the Lord, They did not believe the truth, They had no pleasure, In the truth of God, But in unrighteousness, And I submit to you today, That this too, Is another, Another indicator to us, Do I love the truth of God, Because that truth, Has brought light, And life to me, You were born again, He says, Not of a corruptible seed, But of the incorruptible, Of the living, And abiding, Word of God, Not only do I know it in my head, I know it in my heart, It affects my will, It makes me do, What the Lord would have me do, And it keeps me from doing, What is wrong, Surely, We can see the value, Of contemplating, Our own attitude, To the word of God, And to seek, To ensure,

[ 29 : 26 ] That by his grace, That word, Abides in us, And us, In it, Now our saviour himself, If I need to remind you, Placed great emphasis, On abiding, In his word, You find in the upper room, Discourses, On the night, In which he was betrayed, He emphasized, The place of the truth, Abide in my word, And you abide in me, And you'll be fruitful, He said himself, Earlier on, In chapter 8, Of John's gospel, You shall know the truth, And the truth, Shall make you free, It's important, Therefore, To have a burning desire, In our hearts, To know more, Of the depths, And the riches, Of the truth, As it is in Jesus, And to share it, With others, And you know, That doesn't mean,

That that's me, It means that that's what I should be, And that's what you should be, And that's what you should be aiming at, By the grace of God, We're not saying we've already attained, We're saying we need to be, Seeking to attain, Yet more, Knowing what it ought to be, And assessing where we're at, Confessing where we've gone wrong, And seeking, With all out heart, To abide in the truth, And what John says is interesting here, And I'm just going to round it off with this, Two words he uses, In verse 14, We have seen, That the Father has sent his Son, And secondly, And testify, That the Father sent the Son, See what he says here, He's focusing on, The beholding, Of the Son of God,

In a saving way, Not just, Simply, You're looking at me, I'm looking at you, You're thinking something, I'm thinking something, No, The beholding, We have seen this, A beholding, It's a particular word, In the original, We have gazed upon, We have apprehended the reality, There must needs be that saving encounter, With Jesus, In the truth, Westcott, Was a, An Anglican bishop, Who became infamous, In many circles, Because he, Went, Out of the frame, And devised a new text, Of the New Testament, And he became famous, In the Westcott heart, Text, Of scripture, But that doesn't mean, That the man, Had nothing to contribute, To our understanding, Far from it, He was a very, Able,

Greek scholar, And he, Comments, On this, These words, We have seen, Or we have beheld, And testify, He puts it like this, The object, Of contemplation, Was a revelation, Of the Lord's life, The object, Of contemplation, Was a revelation, Of the Lord's life, And we have, That revelation, They had it, In a, A personal, Face to face way, In order that we would have it, In the living word, And he says there, The object, Of contemplation, Was a revelation, Of the Lord's life, And that, Is true for us, Because it's in the word, And then he says, Secondly, The object, Of witness, Is the declaration, Of its meaning, And I think,

Those things, Are so, Succinctly put, And yet truly put, Where you have, Both contemplation, And declaration, We contemplate, We come to know him, We come to, Live in him, And steady him, Still more, In order, That we declare, The meaning, Of that life, To other people, That is so, Very important, And, I was reflecting, On this, In relation, To our drop-in, And how sometimes, He can be, A wee bit, Wide of the mark, In what you're, Talking about, But it's true, In Christian witness, Generally, We can often, Be wide of the mark, We can often, Fail to, Get to the point, The real point, The object, Of witness,

[ 34 : 34 ] Is the declaration, Of the meaning, Of the life, Of Christ, What did it mean, That the word, Became flesh, And dwelt, Among us, What did it mean, When John the Baptist, Said to his own disciples, Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away, The sin of the world, Let's be clear, In our minds, What the real meaning, Of the Lord's life, Is all about, And John, Saw, And he beheld, Many things, The choice three, Beheld his glory, On the mount, Of transfiguration, They beheld, His glory, In the foot washing, Incident, In the upper room, They beheld, His glory, In that scene, In Gethsemane, Where he, He threw himself,

On the ground, These three hours, They were, Eyewitnesses, Of his resurrection, Of the reality, Of his body, That it was no phantom, They beheld him, Ascending to glory, They contemplated, The revelation, Of the Lord's life, But it didn't stop there, They went on, To declare, The meaning of it, And we have the record, In holy scripture, They passed it, They passed it, On to us, Jesus said, You shall be my witnesses, And we who live, The truth of God, In Christ, Who seek, To abide, In that truth, Must endeavor, To be witnesses, To the revelation, Of the word, Of life, And to explain, The meaning, Of the life, Of Jesus,

To whoever, Will listen, We are to witness to him, That he came, That he suffered, That he died, That he rose again, That he's coming again, And so, John says to us, Abide in God, By his spirit, Abide in his love, By his spirit, Abide in his truth, By his spirit, Whom he has given, To us, May we be able to, Search out our hearts, Under his blessing, And know where we are, And find the reality, Of what we've been looking at, Here today, Amen.