

# Abide in Me

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[ 0 : 00 ] In the first Bibles you'll find the passage on page 901, John chapter 15, and particularly verse 4, although obviously we have to consider Jesus' words prior to verse 4.

But verse 4, where we read in John 15, 4, Abide in me, and I in you. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine.

Neither can you unless you abide in me. Abide in me. Now, for those of you who've been here the last few Sunday mornings, remember we've been looking at invitations that we read in God's Word, invitations to come to know Him, invitations to be disciples of the Lord Jesus.

In our first sermon a few weeks ago, we looked at Jesus' call to come to Him, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. That call given to come to the Lord Jesus, you who are burdened by your sins, burdened by life's troubles, to come to Him, and as Jesus promises, you do come to Him in faith.

He promises His rest. And last week we were considering the Word that we read in Isaiah 55, the Word of God to come to buy from Him, that which costs nothing, that Word of invitation to know salvation in Him, that Word given to the thirsty, to the spiritually thirsty, to know that quenching of your spiritual thirst, to be satisfied in Him, that call given to those who know they're truly thirsting for salvation.

[ 1 : 45 ] The Word also given to those, as we read in Isaiah 55, to those who were labouring for that which doesn't satisfy, but to find in Him, to find in our Lord and Saviour, to find true satisfaction in life, to know that fullness of life, found only in our Lord, our God, our Saviour.

Well, this morning we come to our third invitation, the invitation that Jesus gives, to abide in Him. Now, I'm sure you've heard this many times before, the call of Jesus to abide in me.

But, you know, there's so much that we can delve into to plummet over what Jesus is saying about what is truly important in your life, to know true life, to know life in all its fullness, to know life that truly satisfies, that life that gives you true security, eternal security, life that gives you that true friendship and fellowship with the Lord Jesus, that life that enables you to be fruitful as Christians, to be able to work the works that God's given you to do, to show that, yes, that you love Him, that He loves you, that you're in Him, He in you, that you know that fellowship with the Lord Jesus by abiding in Him as He abides in you.

And so we want to look more closely at the words that Jesus gives here. As I said, a focus in chapter 15, but of course we have to understand how these words have come about because that's why we read chapter 14.

Because, as you'll be aware from these words, Jesus, His arrest, His crucifixion is very, very soon.

[ 3 : 34 ] It's about to happen, just a few hours away, in fact, from the time that Jesus gives these words. So, Jesus is with His disciples in these few hours before that drama that happens.

And, well, even to read the previous chapter, chapter 13, you'll know that Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure.

He's washed the disciples' feet. He's shown that self-sacrificial love for them. He's shared in a fellowship meal. He's spoken of His body about to be broken for His people, His blood about to be given in that sacrificial love for others.

He's told His disciples that He's just going to be with them for a short time longer before He departs from them. And, you know, you can just imagine the disciples, as they're hearing these words of Jesus, you can almost hear their troubled hearts beating away as Jesus, who's been with them for three years, He says, I'm about to leave you.

I'm about to depart from you. And, of course, Jesus knows that their hearts are troubled. That's why He utters these words, as we see at the start of chapter 14. But He's saying, don't let your hearts be troubled.

[ 4 : 51 ]     Keep trusting in God. Trust in me. Trust in God. You've got the prospect of heaven before you. A loving God who's prepared a place in heaven for you.

And as Jesus goes on, as we read on from, certainly, verse 15 of chapter 14, Jesus is assuring them that although He's going to leave them to return to His Father, but they're not going to be left alone.

They're not going to be abandoned. Jesus is going to ask His Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to them when Jesus departs from them.

The Holy Spirit is going to be their guide to teach the disciples and all things to remind them. Yes, all that Jesus had taught them when Jesus was on earth. So the disciples are being given that assurance of peace.

Even after Jesus has departed from them, they're not to be afraid. They have that security, true security, in their Lord, in their Saviour, the God, the Prince of Peace.

[ 5 : 55 ]     So who is it that's speaking here? Who is it that, as we'll see, gives this invitation then in the context of Jesus' departure from His disciples and Jesus going to be with His Father in heaven?

Well, who is giving this invitation? Well, of course, it's the Lord Jesus. And how does He speak of Himself in this context? Because the one who invites speaks of that invitation.

Yes, abiding in Him in the context of what Jesus is saying of Himself. I am the true vine. Now, if you know the I am sayings of Jesus, you'll know that this is the seventh and last of these I am sayings.

So here's Jesus again by these I am sayings, giving that comfort, telling the disciples of Jesus' love for them. And Jesus promising life in all its fullness.

Yes, Jesus is about to depart to His Father, to go to His Father in heaven. But the disciples aren't going to be bereft. They're going to continue to know the blessing, the blessing of salvation found only in Jesus.

[ 7 : 03 ]     And that's the context here. Jesus is teaching them this truth that He's with them always. He is this vine. They are the branches. So even before He gives this invitation to abide in Him, He's explaining by this analogy of Jesus as the vine, what it means for His disciples to know the Saviour, what it means to be in Christ, what it means to remain in Jesus.

So I think we do have to say, well, why does Jesus speak of Himself as the vine? I mean, not only a vine, but as He says, as you see there, the true vine. Well, you've got to go back to the Old Testament.

You've got to see the connection. Because back in the Old Testament, we read there of Israel being compared to a vine. Okay? The people of Israel being compared to a vine.

But they failed. Israel had failed. The people of Israel failed to be fruitful. In other words, they failed to do what God had asked them to do, to be faithful to Him. You read in Isaiah chapter 5, verse 1, for example, that Israel had failed to produce good grapes.

Instead, they produced bad grapes. In other words, they were disobedient. They hadn't produced what God had expected of them, required of them. They'd failed in their commitment and faithfulness to God.

[ 8 : 27 ] They'd been disobedient. They'd been sinful. They'd turned their back on God. And they were going to be judged for their failure. We're going to sing at the end of the service, Psalm 80.

And, you know, you're reading Psalm 80 of exactly that experience in the life of the people of Israel. God had brought, as He said, a vine out of Egypt.

But that vine was going to be judged, burned, with fire cut down. Israel had gone their own way. And God was going to reject them for their unfaithfulness.

But here's Jesus speaking of Himself as the true vine, the one who was and is utterly faithful to His Father, the one who obeyed His Father absolutely, the one who bore the fruit of righteous obedience to God the Father.

So Jesus succeeded what Israel had failed to do. He was faithful. He was fruitful in His obedience. So He's telling His disciples, I'm the true vine. And you abide in Me to be fruitful, to be obedient, to do what God requires of you.

[ 9 : 40 ] And I think we just need to say this, you know, for our own application at this point. Because when you think of who you are as a Christian, you think who you are within the context of the family of God, the people of God, it's got nothing to do with, you know, which country you're from or which part of a country you're from or even your religious heritage or church background.

It's got nothing to do with that at all. It's all about being in Christ and about Christ being in you. If you want to know life in all its fullness, if you want to have that fruitful life that seeks to honour God, to do His will and to do it in a way that honours Him and glorifies Him, you do that only by being in Christ.

As I said, it's got nothing to do with any kind of other kind of identity. But it's all to do with your relationship by being in Christ. Now, of course, for the Jews of Jesus' day, I mean, they said, well, being part of the nation of Israel, that was enough.

That was sufficient to be right with God. But no, absolutely not. Isn't that still very much the focus today? You know, you can be born a Christian. I remember hearing Louis McBatton once saying, you know, I was born a Christian.

He said, no, you're not born a Christian. You're born again as a Christian through the work of the Lord Jesus. And you know salvation, you know it, being in Christ through the work of grace of God.

[ 11 : 15 ] Well, all brings us to, you know, this farewell address of Jesus. Saying, you know, that being in Him means you have true fellowship. That fruitful life that only you have by being in the Savior.

So, Jesus wants to assure His disciples of their continually being in Him, remaining in Him, abiding in Him, that they have life in all its fullness.

So, they're not to lose heart. They're not to be distressed that Jesus' physical departure from them. Because they'll always be in Christ. The Lord Jesus will always be in them.

You who are in Him, you are His eternally. And that's where the analogy of this wine brings home this truth, this eternal, intimate relationship that you have as a Christian that gives you that great comfort to know that you have that unbroken fellowship with the God of all grace, that you have that fellowship with Him through the Lord Jesus.

But, what else do we find here? We've spoken of the one who's the vine. But Jesus doesn't go straight from the true vine to abide in me. He speaks about the one who prunes.

[ 12 : 35 ] And I think we have to see this again in the context of the unbroken fellowship that God's people know. and to see the contrast as well with those who are not in the vine.

Jesus speaks of His Father, God the Father, as the vine dresser, the gardener, if you like. What we read in the Old Testament, God was spoken of the one who planted the vineyard, planted Israel, as it were, nourished Israel, cared for.

And Jesus is bringing us to see that, you know, in God the Father's eternal care for His people. He's the one who tends the vine. He's the one in whom we find that absolute security and trust.

If you like, He's controlled the vine. And the vine being the Lord Jesus who's been faithful to His Father and therefore fruitfulness guaranteed.

But of course, as you see in verse 2, there's a problem. Not every branch as we're told here in the vine is fruitful. Every branch of mine that doesn't bear fruit He takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit.

[ 13 : 50 ] Two sides that Jesus presents here. Two responses to the vine, two responses to the source of true life. One response that's unfruitful and we're told cut off from the vine.

The other that's fruitful and remains in the vine. And let's see what Jesus is saying here. Who are those who are cut off from Christ? Every branch of mine that doesn't bear fruit He takes away.

Well, Jesus certainly isn't saying that if you've given your life to the Lord Jesus, if you've been saved by His grace that somehow you can fall away and be lost eternally. Jesus isn't saying that at all.

But again, when you think of old Israel unfruitful Israel, God's chosen, God's covenant people, but they were unfaithful, disobedient to Him and rejected.

And surely in the same way, those who claim to be Christians, who say, Lord, Lord, but I've never truly been in Christ by faith. What's the evidence?

[ 14 : 52 ] Jesus says the evidence is unfruitfulness. I mean, no Christian is fruitless in his witness in his witness. I mean, there's no such thing as a Christless, fruitless Christian.

Now, of course, we're all fruitful, all productive in our work as Christians to varying degrees. There's no such thing as a fruitless believer. Yes, there are many fruitless unbelievers.

And, you know, think of Judas Iscariot, for example. Here's somebody who'd been with Jesus these three years. You know, who could, who appear to be, as it were, in Christ.

But, of course, we had no saving relationship with the Lord Jesus. And that's a warning, isn't it? We have to truly examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith.

Three weeks' time, we have a communion here. And, well, you can prepare now for taking the communion to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. Examine. Examine your fruitfulness.

[ 15 : 58 ] Yes, examine your profession of faith. But examine how you're showing that you are in Christ. Yes, there are many who, like, you know, Jesus spoke in the parable of the sower, you know, the seed that fell on the rocks or the stony ground, the thorns was some evidence of joy, some evidence of faith.

But no, it wasn't true. Joy, true faith, no. And yes, we say with deep sadness, there are those who might appear to be branches in the vine, who might appear to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus, but only to be found not to have that saving relationship.

And the evidence of a false profession we have to say is when there's no fruit that's born, the example of a false disciple, no evidence of saving faith.

But we don't despair. We don't despair. Because look what Jesus says as he continues in verse 2, every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that we're more fruitful.

If you're truly in the Lord Jesus, if you remain in him, are abiding in him, if you know God the Father as your heavenly Father, the vine dresser, he trims, he prunes you in order that you're more fruitful.

[ 17 : 25 ] And of course we have to put that into, as it were, into practical examples. What is Jesus saying here? How does it happen? Well, surely that pruning speaks of cleansing, of purging.

You know, the example in a garden, if you prune a rose bush, it's more fruitful, more productive. But that pruning surely speaks of God's chastening, God's disciplining us, God's disciplining you through his loving kindness.

As the writer to the Hebrews said in Hebrews 12, he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness. You know, in Scotland during the First World War there were certain clergymen and they believed that the experience of soldiers at the front and the trenches of the battle front actually would produce a national spiritual awakening and that one person, I think it was a minister, but one person spoke of a solemn purification by fire.

You know, that somehow the experience of the troops in the front line of battle, somehow this would have a spiritual effect in their lives and have a national consequence as well for somehow the deepening of the Christian faith in Scotland.

Well, generally it didn't happen. That was, I think, quite the opposite. In fact, many were so blighted by the experience of being in the trenches, the horrors that they witnessed.

[ 18 : 58 ] But, but, can't we say this, that God's solemn purification of the believer may well be through fire, may well be, figuratively speaking of course, but may well be through, and is, through chastening, is, through discipline.

That chastening, that disciplining youth to bring you closer to him, to bring you nearer to him, because God does all things well. Yes, the pruning of branches, yes, the pruning of God's branches, the branches that are in Christ, yes, and you know it in your life, I know in my experience, will involve discipline, and yes, even, even painful discipline, painful chastening, things that perhaps you've clung to for years and years, that have so blighted your witness, blighted your witness as a Christian, and God in his love, chastening you, discipline you for them to be removed, that's God's pruning in your life, so that you be the more a blessing to others, as God has blessed you.

God is active in your life as a Christian, he wants you to be fruitful, he wants you to witness for him, he wants you to show forth the love of God to others, but it may well be that, yes, our fruitfulness is low and cold, and we're not glorifying him as we ought, and yes, it may well be that painful process, as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away, it's better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell, so the pouring that God gives in your life as a Christian, yes, may well involve that pain at the time, but it's for your eternal good, for the good of others, and yes, the good of yourself, and the glory of God, maybe some of you even now, going through that pruning of God's discipline, God's love, that's God's plan for you, his perfect plan for you, and he's doing it, remember, in love, you are his children, you are in him, for you to be more fruitful in his service, be well involved, that pruning, that discipline, and so thank him for these times of discipline and chastening, because as

Paul himself knew and experienced as he wrote to the Romans, chapter 2, verse 4, God's kindness leads you to repentance, there are times we have to fall down on our knees in repentance and thank God for the times that he pruned us, he disciplined us, so that we grow in grace, grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and show that grace and knowledge in being fruitful Christians, fruitful branches in the vine, and being fruitful branches, as Jesus continues to say in verse 3, through the word, through the word, that's what we're trying to say to the children earlier, but through the word of God impacting your life, through the word of God that shows you yourself, that reveals to you where sin lies in your heart, that you are open to God's pruning by the word, and so living by the word, in the word, that we know what it means to honour and glorify God, and it's that point, this point that

Jesus gives the invitation to abide in him, abide in him, you know, as we said, Jesus is about to go to the cross, he's about to die, he's about to be laid in the grave, he's about to show forth that victory over sin and Satan, and yes, three days later, victory over death itself, and Jesus in giving these words, abide in me, saying to his disciples, remain in me, I am remaining in you, you remain in me, so here's this great encouragement that Jesus is giving his disciples as he gives to you, yes, Jesus has gone to the cross, yes, Jesus has been dead in the grave three days, yes, Jesus has risen from the grave, he's ascended to heaven, Jesus says, I am with you, remain in me, and there's the invitation, it's taken, if you like, a while to reach the invitation, but we've had to have all that

[ 23 : 35 ] Jesus said before that invitation to bring home this truth of abiding in Jesus, who you are abiding in, the living, risen, ascended Jesus, and even through his word, he's calling you to remain in him, think of that remaining, remaining in Christ, knowing fellowship with him, knowing friendship with Jesus, knowing fruitfulness as a Christian, you know, it's impossible for a branch of a vine to produce grapes unless it actually stays in the vine stock, well it's impossible for Christians to bear fruit, to be effective as Christians without your abiding in Jesus, without that fellowship with him, without having that intimate closeness with him, without love for him or without love for his word, you cannot and will not be a blessing to others, but the fruit, the fruit that's seen in abiding in Jesus, that will be evident when you have that communion with

Jesus, when you are in Christ and Christ in you, and surely that's a wake up call to us all, if you profess the saviour, these words that Jesus gives us here, is that wake up call, you know, just think of the times, to myself, I have to say this to others, you know, think of the times when you're so fruitless in your witness, well, examine your relationship with Jesus, you know, when you're not reaching out in self-giving love to others, to this person, to that person, to this needy person, you know, when your fruitlessness is evident in self-love rather than self-giving love, well, when that happens, look to your relationship with Jesus, when your spiritual temperature is cold, when you're not on fire for the Lord, ask yourself, am I truly abiding in Christ?

Because the fruit of abiding in Christ, the fruitfulness of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, these graces that Paul tells us in the Galatians, these graces that are evident from being, from abiding in Christ, having that fellowship with the Lord Jesus, it will be seen.

when your fellowship in Him is true and pure and consistent, when you're in the Word, when that Word is in your heart, when that Word truly directs you how you might glorify God, because God's Word will affect your decisions, your plans, your actions, your relationships, your witness, as a Christian, wherever you are, abide in Him through His Word.

of course that will be evident too even in the very nature of your prayer life. Are you communing with God through the Lord Jesus? Is your commitment seen even in the way that you pray and how you pray and your consistency in prayer even through the Savior?

[ 26 : 52 ] These words that we see here, Jesus is inviting you to a life of fruitfulness and a service. don't you seek that full abiding in Him?

Seeking to abide in Him by faith and fellowship and in love and I pray then that you will see an increase in that faithful, your faithfulness and your fellowship with Him, yes, and with one another, in your fruitfulness as a Christian and being a productive Christian.

don't just be content with scraps but may it be the desire of your heart to be used of God, yes, to be a blessing to others for the glory of God's name, for His sake and to respond to the love of Jesus for you by your abiding in Him.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we thank You for Your Word and we pray Lord that truly Your Word will have convicted us. For Lord, we know so often that our following You, our faithfulness towards You is so meagre and weak.

Lord, strengthen Your people through Your Word that they may abide in Christ and Christ in them. May it be that abiding is evident in the witness of Your people by words, by actions that truly point others to the Lord Jesus.

[ 28 : 22 ] So help us then, we pray. Strengthen us, provide for us. In all our needs. Bless us as we continue to worship You now. Bless our fellowship after this service.

May it be that truly we show forth the love of Jesus, even in the very words that we utter one to another. Go before us now, Lord, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 80. It's actually 88, but Psalm 80, on page 107.

And we'll sing from verse 14 down to verse 19. Turn to us, O God Almighty, look and see from heaven above. Tend this vine, your hand is planted, and the Son you raised in love.

The tune of St. Andrew, Psalm 88, verse 14 to the end. St.

[ 30 : 16 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.