

Jesus's Own Abide

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[0 : 00] Well, I'm a little disappointed in you guys today. I can understand you saying good morning louder for Chris than me, but my wife, she said good morning.

You say, there you go. Thank you so much. All right, time to get into our Bibles. John chapter 15. John chapter 15.

So if you don't know it, we're back into our series on the life of Christ. Praise God. We should lead perfectly into Easter, just in the events that are happening in the life of Christ.

If you're new or just visiting, we've actually been for the last year and a bit looking at the four Gospels, tracing the life of Christ. But more specifically, looking at his humanity as he dealt with different situations as he was walking towards the cross.

A couple of goals that we've had for this series. The first goal is that you would have absolute confidence in the reliability of the Gospels. There are no better books anywhere written in the world that talk about Jesus Christ, the historicity, the understanding of the culture and the people and his times, better than the four Gospels.

[1 : 30] Every other book that's been written on that time has been written over 200 years later after these events. So we have men that wrote under the power of the Holy Spirit, who walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, who knew the events that were going on.

Secondly, I hope we've come to a deep appreciation that Jesus Christ, not only was he 100% God, but 100% man. That because of his humanity, there is an ability that he has to fulfill his role as mediator in heaven between God and us.

That not only does he understand God perfectly, but he understands us perfectly. Not simply because he created us and part of that creative process, but to use an idiom from our day, he walked in our shoes.

He smelled the things that we smell. He felt the feelings that we feel. He understands who we are. So throughout the last part of these series, we've been focused primarily on the Gospel of John, more specifically the events of the last supper.

As John provides for us what Jesus literally said and did a mere hours before he went to the cross, I believe that more than anything else, as Jesus prepared the disciples for his sacrifice for them and all of mankind, it reveals so much of the priorities of Jesus' heart.

[3 : 14] Amen? Amen? We've just been able to watch a man who knows he's going to die, yet takes concern for the hearts of the men he's been walking with for these last three years, and he's meeting them in their needs, and how shall I say it, even in their stubbornness or in their inability to not understand, Jesus isn't complaining about, hey, hey, hey, me here.

I need some me time from you guys. He's just constantly pouring himself out to others. It's interesting, as the apostles went into that Passover meal, was told to them that one of them would betray him.

Judas was identified as that betrayer. Jesus also informed him that he was going to leave them. And Peter, supposedly the strongest and most boldest of them all, was told that before that day ends, he would deny Jesus three times.

Chapter 14 outlines how Christ ministered to these men in the middle of their pain, their misunderstanding, their conflicting feelings.

[4 : 44] And Jesus simply shares with them, if I don't go, you cannot come to the Father. I have to go. Not only that, I have to be your mediator.

But someone better than me will come. And he teaches them a bit on the Holy Spirit. So this morning, we're placing our attention on John 15.

At the end of John 14, they actually leave the physical place where they were having that discussion in the upper room, and they are now making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. So we, what's the word? We deduce, we extrapolate, that much of this conversation that is happening now is happening as Jesus is making his way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Next week, I'll have a little map, and I'll show you the way that scholars believe that Jesus would have taken as he went there. And in this text that we're looking at today, probably quite possibly more than any other text of Scripture, for us, answers the question, how can I know if I am truly saved?

[6 : 06] How can I know if I'm truly saved? Now, if you happen to be a card-carrying Baptist, it answers the question, how can I know if everyone else is saved?

Right? It's a joke, guys. Come on. So anyhow, it helps us with our understanding such elements of salvation.

And I can firmly attest to you that this passage out of every other passage in Scripture has had the most profound influence on my life. I remember being confronted with it right before I took off to high school.

And one of the questions that I always had in my mind or I struggled with the fact that I could go to church, go to church with friends, and see people act so differently outside of the church context, whether it be in my high school or where I went away for the summer at summer camps, yet come back to church and kind of put on the Christian clothes.

But yet, when they were outside of church, it was as if they had no desire to be even associated with Jesus Christ. And I'm not talking about some of my peers slipping up, sinning now and again.

[7 : 23] I'm talking about some of my peers who were willfully sinning and had nothing but rebellious actions. And I just kept wondering to myself, are they saved?

Are they saved? Because I came to Christ much later in my grade school years than a lot of them who were born into it. So when I'd be at church, I'd have these talks, and once I was taught what this passage meant, that I'd begin to find the answers to my question.

It is a very simple, straightforward text, but it is also a dense text. I will do my best to look at four different points from here to draw out God's truth that I hopefully will help answer some of those questions that you may have.

So let's look at the text, beginning in John 15, verse 1, and I'm just going to cover 1 to 11 this morning. Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

[8 : 49] Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Verse 4, Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers.

And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. Verse 7, And if you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

[10 : 02] Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full. Needless to say, John has an affinity for the word abide here, doesn't he?

Abide, abide, abide, abide. In fact, he uses it ten times. If you're familiar with his writings in 1 John, which he wrote just before the end of his life, he uses the word abide, abide, abide again, more so than any other author in Scripture.

Now, before I get into taking a part of these texts, the first things we need to understand is we need to understand the symbols that Jesus is using as he's communicating to his apostles this night.

So let's take, briefly understand the symbols that Jesus is using. Verse 1, it says, I am the true vine and my father is the vine dresser. So there's the two symbols.

[11 : 15] Jesus is the vine, God is the vine dresser, and some of your Bibles might say gardener, right? The one who tends to the vine. The last symbol is found in verse 5.

He says it very, quite plainly. I am the vine, you are the branches.

So the imagery that Jesus is using here is any person in first century Judaism is going to perfectly understand what it means.

How many people are not gardeners here? A lot of us, right? Do we understand the symbols? Right? Yeah, we all do, right? We all, kind of an idea, a tree or a vine, it's a planet in the ground and there's a trunk or this vine that goes out and then there's branches that come out and the fruit grows on the branch.

It's pretty, how do I say this? Parable 101. This is probably one of the most simplest parables to understand that Jesus ever spoke. Now, one of the things that we really need to remember is the tone of what Jesus is talking about.

[12 : 32] Notice in chapter 14, I just kind of covered it. For lack of a better word, the apostles are fragile. Right? They're tender.

They're uncertain. Just a couple of questions earlier, one of them is even asking, Jesus, are you really of the Father? Like, we left our whole lives to follow you.

We left our family, our jobs, our careers. We've been with you for these three years. Are you really who you say you are? So notice what Jesus begins with.

I am. Now, if you are familiar, the Gospel of John features six I am statements, and these statements are radically important for the identification of Jesus Christ.

The I am statement means that Jesus Christ is in fact the long awaited Messiah. And if you're not familiar with where it comes from, it actually comes from Exodus 3.

[13 : 46] It's a moving passage. It's Israel is stuck in Egypt. They're slaves and they're crying out to God.

And at this point it's been 400 years since the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph. Any understanding of their faith comes from simply grandparent to parent to child just telling the stories that we were given this promise.

Our great, great, great, great, great grandfather Abraham came out of Ur and God made a promise to him that give us a land and what land? We're sitting here in Egypt of slaves.

We're being beaten. We're being tormented. We're dying. Where are you, God? So God, as you know, raised this man named Moses.

Moses. And Moses was to lead them out of the wilderness, so to speak, or out of Egypt. But you have to remember, Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace.

[14 : 53] He didn't hear all the stories as much as everyone. He knew he was a Jew that those were his people, but he was raised in the palace as a prince. So God had to communicate with Moses and explain to who he was.

And we find this story in Exodus 3.13. Let me read it to you. Then Moses said to God, because remember this bush catches on fire and it's talking to him.

And, you know, sometimes we over, we think they always had full knowledge when that event happens. Do you know what I mean? Like, because we've read the whole story of the Bible or those old, Old Testament stories, we kind of think that Moses knew everything that happened before in the Old Testament.

He wasn't aware of those things until God taught him. So all of a sudden he's got this bush talking to him. Who's this? What's going on? And he knew it never consumed this bush and he said to God, if I come, so God is explaining to Moses, you're going to lead my people out and he says, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent you to me and they ask me, what is his name?

What shall I say to them? Right? He doesn't even really know him. He's got no trust built up with them, no nothing. God said to Moses, I am who I am.

[16 : 25] It's the first place we hear the great statement, I am. And he said, say this to the people of Israel. I am has sent me to you.

God also said to Moses, say this to the people of Israel. The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

This is my name forever. And thus, I am to be remembered throughout all generations. generations. I am.

The first time Jesus says, I am the bread of life. He who eats of me will never hunger. He then, he says, I am the light of the world.

Then we read, I am the door, the gate. He who enters has eternal life. Jesus earlier made the statement, I am the good shepherd. shepherd.

[17:28] I am the resurrection and the life. And just in verse, in chapter 14, he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. So when Jesus opens up with something, we just think it's an I am when we're reading over.

There's so much more in that I am. You get that? I am the promised Messiah. And this is how we demonstrate it. I am the true vine.

It's not I am the vine for the analogy of this story. I am the true vine. I am the true vine.

In the Old Testament, Psalms and Isaiah used the term vine for Israel. Israel was to be the vine. but it wasn't the real vine. Life did not come from Israel. Life came from being a part of God. Amen? Israel was supposed to be that example, to be that part.

[18:42] But what Jesus is claiming here quite clearly, that eternal life comes through him, not through the bloodline of being a Jew.

You with me on that? Eternal security comes being a part of vine. When we looked at the life of Christ, this has been the biggest thing for the Jews. Every time Jesus Christ confronted them on an issue, they kept saying, well, we're sons of Moses.

Right? It doesn't matter what we do or what we say or how we live this life. since we are of the seed of Abraham, we're okay.

We're okay. And Jesus has clearly demonstrated over and over to them, you are not okay. And in fact, I'm trying to prove myself through the miracles that I'm speaking as from God, but you do not listen.

So what Jesus is proclaiming right at the very beginning is that he is not just a vine, but he is a, he is the true vine.

[19:53] Not so much with an emphasis on the correct vine, but the sense that he is the real vine. To be attached to the real vine, the true vine, is to be attached to real life.

And what Jesus is proclaiming to them in such a very short statement is, true life is found in me.

You see, Jesus, you see, Israel was known as the vine, but it was not real in the sense that it was life-giving.

Jesus claimed that he is the true Israel, the true people of God. vine. So that's the first symbol that we see.

Not only do we see Jesus as the vine, he is the true vine, he is the vine which only life can come from. Then we have a father who will be the gardener and we are the branches.

So that's the first thing I want you to pay attention to. Let's take a look at the next thing, which is the command. Jesus gives them a command, verse four, abide in me. Abide in me.

[21:10] Jesus uses this term ten times in this text. At the core of its meaning, to abide, means to dwell, to remain, or to live.

But it's not talking about a physical place, and I think we understand that. The question is, where do you dwell, where do you abide?

There's a common idiom we use. Home is where the heart is. Kind of gives us an understanding of what this text means.

Where do you abide? Where do you make your home? Or another way of saying it, who has your heart? where does your heart live?

Where does your heart remain? To abide in Christ means to remain in a close, intimate relationship with Jesus.

[22:18] Now, if you're sitting there, what does that mean? Let me ask you a question. If I ask you, do you have a close, intimate relationship with your spouse, you know what that means.

You know whether you do or you don't. Just because you're married does not mean you have a close, intimate relationship. You know in order to have that close, intimate relationship with your spouse, many things need to happen, right?

You need to have forgiveness. You need to have confession of sin to one another. You have to have honesty. So these are the type of things that we can take from the example of marriage that we can use for that relationship with Jesus.

To put in other words, it means a daily, ongoing connection. We cannot have an intimate relationship with anybody, let alone our spouses, if we are not connecting with them or communicating with them.

With Jesus, it means prayer, studying his word, participating in worship. And as Jesus will elaborate further, it means obedience and loving others.

[23 : 30] Let's take a look at verse 4. It says, abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

So guys, I know you are these 11 apostles, you are scared. one's already fallen away. You know what's on their mind, right? What's going to stop me from being like Judas?

It might not be 30 pieces of silver, or maybe it'll be 60 pieces. How can I know? How can I resist that temptation? How can I still stay with you, Jesus?

Abide in me and I in you. There's a promise within the command. You stay attached to me. I will be attached to you.

Verse 5. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

[24 : 41] There's so much theology that's so involved in here. And it all goes down to how do we know if we're saved? We know that good works don't save us, but we knew with a renewed spirit and living with Christ, good works happen, right?

To be renewed by Jesus Christ and not have good works follow, chances are we're really not saved. Because what happens at that moment of salvation is we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You guys have heard me talk about we're given a new heart, a new motivations for life. Now when that happens, Satan is going to attack and Satan wants to rewire, he wants to attack those emotions and he wants those affections going elsewhere.

And this is essentially what God is calling to and abide. It's place your affections in me. Put your affections in the things of me.

As one writer says, abiding in Christ is a continual reliance on Jesus for spiritual nourishment, strength, and guidance.

[25 : 57] It involves surrendering our will to his and allowing Jesus to work in and through us to produce spiritual fruit.

fruit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

It's like if your life was a garden, if you're not seeing those fruits grow in your garden bed, you're not attached to the vine.

You see, the right relationship is kept going by, just like it is when we talk about our spouses or our friends confessing sin.

It continues on with seeking forgiveness. It continues when we pursue holiness. holiness.

Ultimately, it involves a daily surrender of our lives to his lordship and a commitment to follow Jesus wherever he leads.

[27 : 15] J.C. Ryle, the great 18th century preacher, writes, to abide in Christ means to keep up a habit of constant close communion with him, to be always leaning on him, resting on him, pouring out our hearts to him, and using him as our fountain of life and strength, as our chief companion, the best of friends.

To have his words abiding in us is to keep his sayings and teachings continually before our minds and to make them the guide of our actions and the rule of our daily contact and behavior.

That is what it means to abide in Christ. It's to live in Christ's presence, to dwell. It's to where we place our heart's affections on.

But if you notice in verse 6, Jesus gives them a warning. So this is the third part.

First we look at the symbols, we get the command, now there's the warning. Verse 6, if anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

[28 : 46] Now the biggest question that arises that different commentaries try to answer is, who are these branches? Are there anybody that just doesn't believe in Jesus?

Because, you know, we're looking in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit hasn't really come yet, there's no new church, Jewish, so some people think it's anybody who's not Jewish.

But what we see very clearly is it's individuals who are a part of the vine or who are around the vine. You with me on that one? They're in close proximity to the vine.

I believe these are the people, the Jews, who thought they were of the faith. I believe it can be us who live in the church, who do the things of the church, but still are not attached to the vine.

It is those whose affections are still in the world and not on Jesus. You see, the reality is we are either part of the vine or we are not.

[30 : 04] Our works are not an indication of our position in Christ, but it is our position in Christ that directs our works. To put it simply, works do not save us, but we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, which produces good works.

The fact of the matter is there are all sorts of fruit-like objects that we can produce in our flesh, but the reality is those things will only serve us so long.

Essentially, that fruit will wither and die, and that branch will fall off. It will be gathered together, and it will be burned.

I believe these are those who hang out with Jesus, so to speak, but instead of depending on faith in Jesus to save them, they seek to save themselves with their own goodness.

Those are the ones that have come to the conclusions that their works are enough to justify them. It could be simply coming to church. It could be simply taking communion.

[31 : 20] It could be simply getting baptized. It could be simply saying with their mouth, I am about Jesus. But in the end, their hearts do not belong to Jesus.

So for today, I really believe it's those people who are here in our church today who associate with Jesus, who associate with people of the church, who like church, they're Jesus positive, but they're ultimately not united to the true vine.

Their vine could be people in the church. Their vine could be the works that exist. But it is not ultimately Jesus Christ.

You see, assurance of salvation does not come from professing faith. Assurance of salvation is a life filled and bears good fruit because it's attached to the vine.

Here's the question that gets asked. What is good fruit? Let me tell you. Verse 7. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

[32 : 44] By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Now I want you to note how Jesus talks about abiding in Christ.

Now at no place does he say that to abide in Christ means you live a perfect life. Notice he doesn't say that. He doesn't say to abide in Christ means you live a sinless life.

Can I tell you, I don't know if Jesus wore jewelry. I don't know. But I do know he did not have a bracelet that said what would Jesus do. Right?

Now I want you to think about that idea of what would Jesus do. You know, and it goes around and helps some people. You know what, I'm going to go crash that car into that store and steal the jewelry. Oh wait, I got the bracelet on.

Jesus wouldn't do that. Right? You know, people kind of use that. The problem with asking the question what would Jesus do is guess what? You're not Jesus. You're not.

[33 : 47] You're not perfect. You do not have a perfect mind, a perfect will. God, thankfully, has not called us to be perfectly like Jesus.

Amen? Do you know how discouraging that would be? Man. But some people live in their heads that that's what we're supposed to be.

And they persist in trying to be perfect. And I want to share something with you. And it's kind of funny that this has come up the last three weeks of conversation with people.

And just even in our study, Every Man a Warrior, we were dealing with this last week. And it's an important point that I need you guys to understand. We do not obey God because we live in fear of being punished.

Do you get that? Some people think the Christian life is these do's and these don'ts. Right? So if I can keep doing the do's and avoid the don'ts, I avoid the smack to the hand.

[34 : 55] Right? And some of you guys grew up like that. You grew up in a home where if you got out of line, smack. And it still has transferred to our understanding of God.

That somehow God in his spirit is like hovering over us. Just waiting for us to step outside the boundaries.

Right? Just lose your temper. Say something you don't want to. Or just fall into some other tent. Wham! What a dreadful God that is.

What a horrible place to be. My friends, nowhere, nowhere in the pages of scripture is God ever described in such a way.

Because some of us were more fearful and caught up in what I can't do rather than what I should be doing.

[36 : 06] Right? And not only that, when you're in that don't pile, you start making up don'ts. You know that? And you guys know what I'm talking about. Don't think you don't know.

You know. You start thinking about, you know, sinners go to bed after 10. Right? You know? Whatever. You know, I know in the Bible it says I'm supposed to do my devotions in the morning. If I don't do my devotions in the morning, you know, smack, God's going to punish me. But then you find out later on in another part of scripture, it's okay to do your devotions in time with the Lord at night.

So, what do you do? Right? So, you just get caught up with this God who's more preoccupied with the don'ts than the do's. That if we sin, God is somehow going to jump in with some sort of punishment.

Get that? If I sin, God punishes me. Let me inform you what scripture says. The primary effect of our sin when you and I continue in sin.

[37 : 18] You know what the greatest damage that is done? It's my relationship with God is broken. Do you get that? That is the worst thing that can happen to us.

When Jesus Christ, in less than 24 hours, in John 15, not even that, he's going to the cross. Jesus Christ does not fear the whip.

He does not fear the crown of thorns. He does not fear people lying about him, yelling at him, throwing things at him. You know what Jesus Christ fears?

Being separated from God the Father. That is his only fear. The wrath of all our sins is going to be poured out on Jesus.

But for what breaks Jesus' heart is that his Father will turn his back on him. When we rebel and fight God, God doesn't need to punish us.

[38 : 31] We're already choosing to punish ourselves. Now, I'm not saying that when you sin, you're not suffering consequences.

You do, right? Choose to sin, choose to suffer. You make sinful decisions financially, you lose money. You're wayward of promises, you suffer broken relationships.

But the biggest thing that we can suffer is a broken relationship with God. To be in a point in our lives where he no longer hears our prayers.

Because we're continually wanting to sin. When we sin, we are willingly cutting ourselves up from Jesus and God. We are no longer a part of the vine.

Sometimes God, with specific sins, does act strongly against. But they're nothing in comparison than being separated from the true vine.

[39 : 45] And what happens is, when we're inside this world apart from the true vine, we're stuck on stupid.

You ever notice that? You're stuck on stupid. Because you no longer have the Holy Spirit warning you. God's not helping you. Because you are continually turning your back on him.

And the only thing that ultimately saves you is the prayer of God's people. You know who intervenes? The gardener. The gardener's got to reach out, cut you out, out of all those weeds and that mess you've created.

And bring you back to the good soil. But that's only because of the grace of God. Amen? So, what happens is, and the question...

So, anyhow, let me back up a little second. So, there's this verse that we read. Look at verse 3. It says, Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

[40 : 56] And what Jesus is mean by that is, You men, you apostles, you have no guilt. Because the word has cleansed you. How does the word cleanse you?

Well, one of the ways it does is it informs us of our sin. Amen? That's what we, in every man a warrior, One of the first verses the men learn is 2 Timothy 3.16.

It says that all scripture is breathed out by God And profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, And training in righteousness.

And what that means is the more of God's word That we have inputted into ourselves, How much more we are aware of our sin.

And it's not a bad thing. Because once we're living in the spirit, And I know I've sinned against Chris Mitchell, What do I do? Man, I just sinned against Chris Mitchell.

[41 : 53] Chris, please forgive me. That's it. Right? It's just going to Chris and saying, I sinned, you didn't know it the other day, I was banging, you know, I keyed your car, I thought that was what I was supposed to do, But now I know scripture, you know, Whatever it is.

But you know that sometimes, When we're young in the Lord, We don't know a lot. We're not responsible for a lot. But as we continue to grow in Christ, And we know more of his word, We see how it corrects us.

And ultimately it trains us in righteousness. And like it says, It cleans us. We can come before the Lord guilt free.

And let me tell you something about this word guilt. A couple days ago, My son was in a discussion with a friend, And they were feeling guilty about something.

And I said, First of all, Guilt isn't actually a feeling. Do you know that? It's a judicial standard. You either are guilty, Or you aren't guilty.

[42 : 54] Right? You with me on that? It's a state of being. It's not a feeling. The feeling that you have, Is usually shame. So if I know I sinned against Chris, And I didn't do anything, I know I'm guilty, But I'm going to try to avoid Chris.

Right? Because every time I see it, Oh, I feel stupid, Or I feel shameful for what I did to him, Or all those kind of things. But when I make that promise, And I say, Lord, I need you to forgive me, I go to Chris.

That shame disappears. And what's more, And we've covered this over and over and over, God remembers their sins no more. Amen? Once they've been confessed and repented, It's not like we go to God, And we think about, You know, 30 years ago I had this sin.

It's not there anymore. Even if it was vile and horrible, And it happened 24 hours earlier. I will remember it no more. He's the safest place on earth to go to.

Amen? Amen? That shame, regret, sadness. Sometimes we will feel that towards people we've hurt.

[44 : 09] But if we have gone, Confessed and sinned and repented, We need to leave that with those people, So they can get to a point of forgiving us. And then they can go to God for, For confessing their sins, For not repenting us sooner.

Amen? So to no longer be guilty means you no longer need to feel shameful.

You no longer need to feel regret. You need no longer to feel sad feelings. It simply gets replaced by joy.

Because the barrier that you once had before God, And before the people you hurt, Is removed. See, God's word is what brings truth to you.

It's God's word that speaks truth into your life. It reveals your sin. It allows you to be cleansed. And it reveals that you need to be fixed. And you can be fixed.

[45 : 11] And repentant of. Amen? You see, We need that. Because God wants us complete. God wants us equipped for every good work.

It's interesting. I first learned this with my friend. I'm at university. And I'm enjoying some wings. And there's this guy. I don't know if I shared that story with you. And it turned out we went to grade school together.

And through just that relationship, He trusted me. He shared the gospel of good news of Jesus Christ with him. He gets saved. And Campus Crusade, One of the other ministries, They're trying to get in there with his life.

But he's been living with his girlfriend for seven years. Right? So they're really on him about, You got to move out of that house. You got to do stuff. And I'm like, Guys, The bomb's gone off.

Right? Like he's been living with it for seven years. Like all of a sudden, Like he just became a Christian like three weeks ago. Why not let just the spirit have its way? You know? And sure enough, He will attest to you as they were there.

[46 : 13] He just kind of, It just didn't feel right sharing the bed with her anymore. And then he started, And he just didn't know what was going on. And then finally, Just as I had given him some verses to read, He started reading them.

And then she came in for counseling. And wanted to know what was going on with him, Now that he's a Christian. And just as he was growing in the faith, He started to understand, And he wanted to be clean before God.

Amen? It happened. It happened actually quite quickly. Sometimes we're in such a rush to get in And make sure everything's perfect. Let God have his way.

They'll be responsible for what they know. Bring God's word to bear as it needs to be. But we do not need to be that hammer. The last thing I want to share with you, I want to share with you five blessings of abiding in Christ.

Ready? Five blessings. The first ones are going to be really quick. And we all find them in the text. The first blessing of abiding in Christ is you are delivered from judgment. You are delivered in judgment.

[47 : 19] You will not be taken up, thrown into the fire. Right? So you are eternally saved. You are saved from hell. Number two, you have the power of prayer.

You have the power of prayer. Because you are abiding in Christ, you are part of the vine. You know God's will. You know what to pray for. And you know how to pray for. Number three, the third blessing of abiding in Christ is that your works glorify God the Father.

Get that? Your works bring glory to God. As you know his will, as you're praying for the things that you do, building fruit, go to glorify God.

Isn't that not a worthy life to have? When people try to say, I'm trying to find the point of my life? Really? Really? And the fourth point, you will be filled with joy.

You will be filled with joy as you were secured in your salvation and seeing God work through you. And here's the last blessing of abiding in Christ.

[48 : 33] You get to have God as your gardener. You get to have God as your gardener. A gardener doesn't let the garden just go.

The gardener works hard in that vine, pulls the weeds. Sometimes it cuts off branches so that you can have a more bountiful fruit.

Last couple of weeks ago, we talked about trials of life. Some of the trials of life that we experience is simply God pruning us.

God taking out something out of our life that is affecting our fruitfulness. Sometimes when we're being challenged, we wonder if we're cursed, but we're actually loved.

We're actually cared for. That God's great love for you is so great for you, He desires you to grow with the maximum amount of fruit.

[49 : 37] And we know in Hebrews 12 that God disciplines us. And that word discipline isn't to punish, but He trains us.

And it seems painful at first, but we see the good results. I know, know, and I've met several Olympic athletes, nobody has made it to the top because they're a natural athlete.

I'm telling you right now. They reach a barrier, then they've got to go beyond that, only through hard training. You see, how does God prune us?

Well, God sometimes strips us of situations that will inhibit our growth. God strips us of situations that will inhibit our growth. We might think that situation is good.

We don't understand why we can't go, but God doesn't want there. Sometimes God removes people that are spiritually detrimental to our lives. We may want that relationship.

[50 : 36] We might want that friendship. But God says, no, they're detrimental to your walk in me. Sometimes God will press us to release bad habits. He will force us to place Him as the priority in our lives.

Trials may make us grieve, but we need to be encouraged that we are never, ever left alone of our own devices. Sometimes those trials that many of us do face will feel overwhelming.

We may have grown up or continue to grow up with unspiritual and unbiblical family members, whether it be our parents or our spouses. And it's hard.

I get it. You may have a spouse that is particularly difficult to love. One of the lessons that we learn in every man a warrior is that we are called to love our wives as Christ loved the church.

And there's no condition on that. We're even called to love her when she doesn't love us. And I know that's heartbreaking. You may find it very difficult to have integrity in the workplace.

[51 : 57] That the only way you know that you can get ahead is if you break the rules. And sometimes some trials are so overwhelming they involve being sick, having a grief-filled heart,

you're without work, or you're experiencing persecution.

Often in those times, the people that I know who've experienced these things are those that have the greatest faith.

Because they cling to the vine. See, the purpose of these trials of the Lord working in our lives is to simply allow God to work himself out in our lives to bear the fruit that God desires to see.

Notice I didn't say to bear the fruit that you desire to see. God may have different plans for you than you have plans for yourself.

Take a look at verse 10. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

[53 : 19] These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. What is interesting is that these 11 men will be stripped of Jesus in a very short time.

He will return and be with them for 40 days. But every single one of these men would undergo the worst of persecution. And every single one of them continued to abide with Jesus.

And by doing so, the fruit of their lives went on to change the world. They grew eternal fruit even in the face of death.

And for that, we praise the name of the Lord. Amen? Let's pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father. It's funny how there's so much pain mixed in with the joy in these type of passages.

For some, my brothers and sisters of the faith, we know that the pruning is hard. Life has been tough.

[54 : 37] But yet so is the sweetness of the relationship with you. Father, we know many in our lives who've turned their backs on the faith because they did not want to be pruned.

The fruit that they wanted was a fruit of their own hearts rather than from the heart of God. Father, we've all struggled to abide with you at all times.

Sometimes we've sinned. Occasionally others we've allowed habitual sins to come into our lives. But yet the moment we confess and repent, they are no longer remembered.

And Father, even in the sins where there's great consequences, you remain with us. You continue to build us. You make us men and women of integrity.

You take some of us that were so absolutely broken and you rebuild us into something that is so marvelous that you would die for. That our value is not seen in ourselves.

[55 : 52] Our value is seen that you would shed the blood of your own son for us. That you see in us an eternal value.

That we have been created in your image to do good works that glorify God. No matter our background, no matter our family background, no matter the color of our skin, the country, we come from it still the same God.

We are still, everyone, the same people. And we are loved in the same way. Simply because you have a great love for us.

So Father, I pray that we would continually place our affections in you. The things of you. That our time would be spent with the people of you.

That we want to see your name glorified. I pray that we would be willing to be a part of your missions that you do, oh Father. Just as we come together as a church and we seek after you, pray that we continually be joined together, even with the other cities of this church as we seek to obey you, to share the good news of this gospel with this incredibly secular culture.

[57 : 16] God, we go forth. May we use this sermon to confess and repent of our sin.

May we use this sermon to give thanks to you, oh Father. We give you thanks that you are the true vine, that we will seek eternal life nowhere else but you.

Thank you for loving us so. Your most holy, endearing, forgiving, and wonderful name. Amen. Amen.