

Abiding in The Word

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- [0 : 00] We're on chapter 8. And maybe we could read at verse 30, but it's in verse 31 particularly. And as he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
- But particularly if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. Now as we know, obedience to God's word is absolutely fundamental to being a Christian.
- It's probably the great overriding fact where you are quite happy to call Jesus Lord and Master. And when you become a Christian, you want your life to be moulded and shaped by the truth.
- Because Jesus asks the question, we find that in other occasions, and he says, Why call me Lord, Lord, when you don't do the things that I ask you to do?
- [1 : 09] And it's a question that we always have to ask ourselves as well. Now, we find in this particular chapter here, how important the word of God is.
- And we know that the word Lord means an owner and a master. And that's who Jesus becomes in our lives the day we become Christians, where he becomes our owner, he becomes our master.
- He takes charge of our will. And you and I know that the most difficult thing to part with is our own will. It's the one thing we don't want to give up.
- And that's what happens when we become Christians, that we are ready and willing that God's will will be most important. It's a great obstacle to becoming a Christian, because we want to be in control.
- We want to be in charge of our own lives. It's a natural instinct. It's my life and I'll do what I want. That's what the human heart thinks. And so it's very difficult.
- [2 : 18] In fact, it's an impossibility apart from grace to submit ourselves to the will of another. And that's what God does when he comes by his spirit.
- He breaks the stubbornness of our own will and enables us to be subject to his will. And so that is the great evidence of becoming a Christian, is that you are quite happy to hand over your life to the Lord.
- Now, of course, as Christians, we still want to do our own will. And I'm sure every single one of you know what it's like. And so often we have to say, Lord, not my will, but yours be done.
- But so often we find there's this conflict goes on between the drawing of God's spirit and through the way God's word works within us against the stubbornness of our own self-will.
- And it's one of the evidences of grace is when we're aware of this clash, this conflict, and we find ourselves like the apostle saying, the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I don't want to do, that's what I end up doing.
- [3 : 34] And that's part and partial of our Christian journey. But Jesus tells us that this word sets us free. And it sets us free first and foremost from the dominion of sin.
- It's not that sin is eradicated. Sin isn't removed. You and I are still sinners. But sin no longer has absolute mastery and control.

We didn't realize it before, but we were utterly slaves to sin. Sin had total control of our lives. But when Christ comes in, that changes.

He now becomes Lord. He now becomes master. He is now owner of our lives. Even although sin still rages, it doesn't rule.

Christ is now the ruler of our lives. Now, what we find here, this word disciple, where we find it so often that Jesus says, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

[4 : 42] And I think a disciple is best understood like an apprentice. You and I know that an apprentice is somebody who learns from their master.

And they imitate. They watch what's being done. They listen to what's being taught. And they try to put into practice what they see and what they hear.

And that's exactly how it is for us as well. Because Jesus is our Lord. He's our master. And we're the apprentices. We're the disciples.

We are taking on board what he says. We are seeking to do what he says. So it's not just a matter of listening. James warns us against that because he says, we are not just to be hearers of the word, which is vital, but we are also to be doers of the word.

That if we simply hear the word and don't do, we deceive ourselves. And he goes on to say that the truth actually isn't in us. But it's so important that we lay it up on our heart and we practice in our lives what the word of God teaches us.

[5 : 48] And so when we look at what's before us here, we find that Jesus, I believe that he's talking to two groups. Because the Jews are here.

It's one group of Jews. But as he speaks, we find that it tells us there, as he was saying these things, many believed in him. Now, I don't know at what level that belief was.

Were they accepting just who he was or had they come to actually embrace him as Lord and Master? But there are also other Jews there and they completely reject.

Because I think if we hold that in our mind as you go through that chapter, you realize that there are two branches of Jews. And that's just still the way it is. There's always two.

There's some who hear and some who refuse to hear. It's always the same. Because Jesus, he says in verse 37, for instance, I know that you are offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my words find no place in you.

[6 : 56] So it's obvious that he's speaking to those who believe in him and those who have no place for him. And so we have these two groups that are being spoken to here.

Now, the unbelief of the Jews really is quite extraordinary here because they say in verse 33, we are offspring of Abraham and never have been enslaved to any.

You see, when Jesus is telling them that if they accept his truth, his word, they'll be free. And they're saying free. We are free.

We've never been enslaved to any. Now, when you think about it, if any group of people ever talked rubbish, it was that group there. Because the history, just at a natural level, of the Jews was one of constant slavery, being enslaved.

You go to the Book of Judges, and there were seven different nations that enslaved Israel until they cried to God. And you had the different deliverers like Gideon and Samson and so on.

[8 : 05] And then you look at the formation of the kingdom of Israel under Saul and eventually David and then Solomon. And then after Solomon, it broke into two with Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

And there was a northern tribe of Israel and a southern tribe of Judah. And remember what happened. The northern tribe was taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

The southern tribe was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. And so there was this constant enslavement of being in bondage to others.

And as they spoke to Jesus, in fact, they were in slavery to Rome. Rome were controlling the Jews at that time. But when they applied at a spiritual level, they were saying, we're the seed of Abraham.

We cannot be anything but free. We have a freedom. We are the people. And they were looking at their people. They were looking at their privileges. And they were absolutely taking real umbrage at what Jesus was saying.

[9 : 18] And they couldn't understand that they were anything but free. Naturally, they were slaves. Spiritually, they were slaves. But they couldn't see it.

And still the same today, that every person outside Christ cannot see that they're trapped, that they're slaves to sin, to Satan.

They're not free. And when you look back in your life, you remember when you first gained the liberty of the gospel, where it opened up.

Can you remember the freedom that you got? There was this realization that you'd been delivered. And there was this new sense of wonder.

Your eyes were open to see things in a completely different way. You were free. You felt free for the first time ever in your life.

[10 : 17] And so that's what these Jews didn't understand. They weren't able to lay hold upon what Jesus was saying. But you notice how important the word of God is in all this.

Because Jesus is here talking about if you abide in my word. Now, the word, of course, we know is central. It's key to everything. That's where people come to faith.

That's what it says. As he was saying these things, the word, many believed in him. Paul said, as we preach these things, many of you believed. And faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And that's why it's vital that people will hear God's word. We need to get people to come to God's house. We need to get people reading God's word. Because there is always hope for a person who has a Bible that is open and a Bible that's being read.

And there's always hope for a person who puts himself under the word of God. If a person closes a Bible and closes their ears to the word, you don't hold out that hope.

[11 : 29] But as long as the word has a place in a person's heart and life, there is always hope for that person. Because as we said, that's where faith, faith comes by hearing.

But we find here that Jesus is talking about the importance. He's saying to them, many believed in him. And Jesus goes on to say, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciple.

This is the key, is continuing. Because Jesus makes it very clear, for instance, in the parable of the sower, that when the good seed goes down into the ground, there are different responses.

And you remember on the rocky ground that the seed sprung up very quickly. And it looked promising.

And you'd say, that's rapid growth. But then what happened? When the sun came out and beat down upon it, it withered because there was no root in it.

[12 : 34] And Jesus is saying, that's how it's going to be with some people. There's like an instant response to the gospel. It seems that they're following the Lord.

They're out there. Yeah, this is it. But very quickly, they disappear. But the proof that you are truly a Christian is continuing because God's word is abiding in you.

And you're following. And you've been, you know, we have a lovely expression here. It's, I don't know that they use it in other places. But when a person becomes a Christian, we use the expression, so-and-so started following.

I don't know if they use it in other places, but it's used here. And it's a very biblical expression. It's a very, it's a lovely expression. Did you hear that so-and-so started following?

Nothing else needs to be said, but just that they're following. And when you follow, you continue to follow. You don't follow for a little. You follow forever.

[13 : 39] Doesn't mean that you follow perfectly. We know all too well that throughout our following, there are times that you just need to go to the Bible and you look at some of the great saints.

And you look at people like David. And you look at people like Peter. They fell really badly. But they weren't derailed. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

And though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down because the Lord is holding him by the hand. Isn't that great? So that even if you fall, you won't fall all the way down because you're being held.

You're being kept. And so the great proof of really following the Lord is continuing. And you look back, whether it's been two years or five years or 10 or 30 or 40 or 50 years.

And you think of all the ups and downs in life. And you think of all the temptations. And you think of all the things that have happened. And the many times that Satan has said, you know, you've been fooled.

[14 : 49] You've been deceived. It's not real. And you know what you say? You say to Satan, you say to everybody else, to whom else can we go?

For thou is the words of eternal life. And you know it. And that's why you're still following. That's why you're still hanging on. Despite all the batterings and blows and all the ups and downs, nowhere else you can go.

Because Jesus is your owner. He's your Lord. He's your master. And you are happy to be his disciple, to be his follower. And so we find that this word, this word is key to our lives.

This word is what does everything within our life. And this word, we could say, there's a lot of things we could say just very briefly as we come to conclude.

That the word, the word is an ever-growing word. You know, when God's word comes into your heart and into your life, that's not the end of it. It continues to grow and develop.

[15 : 57] And that's why when you come to God's word, and you've all experienced that, and you read a verse that you've, or a chapter or a section, and you've read it often enough before.

And then as you're reading it, you're saying, well, you know, I never saw that before. You read it. You know it. So what's happened? The Lord is opening your mind to see more so that the word of God continues to grow and to develop.

Just like a tree, you'll see sometimes new branches growing out. So it is in the Christian, bearing more fruit. So it's ever-growing. And also this word, when it goes down into our lives, it's an invigorating word.

It gives new life and new strength. And I'm sure, particularly on a Wednesday, when you're, maybe you've had a busy day, and there's been a lot on.

It's different, maybe, to the Lord's Day, because the Lord's Day is a quieter, it's calmer. But maybe Wednesday's been a busy day, or a Thursday, and you're tired, and there's the temptation.

[17 : 11] Oh, I'm too tired to go. And sometimes things are, and you can come to church, and rather than going out, you go out more invigorated than when you came in.

And that's because God has brought something from the word into your experience, into your soul. And maybe it's in the singing. Maybe it's in the reading.

Maybe somebody's quoting in something in the prayer or in the preaching. And it strikes a chord, and it lifts you up. And the depths that you were in, you're up into the heights.

And this is what God's word does and continues to do in our experience. But it's also a sanctifying word.

Remember Jesus in the high priestly prayer, he said, Sanctify them through the truth. Thy word is truth. And that's what God's word is doing.

[18 : 09] It's like a cleansing. It's like a shower. It's like a fast-flowing river. And it's going down, and like we're in the stream, the stream of God's word. And God's word convicts us.

And I'm sure you all know at times that you're going to do something or say something, and God's word comes and stops you. Because you are heading into sin. And so sometimes, sadly, we go against what God's word says.

And that grieves us afterwards. And we say to ourselves, you know, Lord, you spoke to me, and I didn't listen. And that hurts us. But the thing is, God's word is at work.

And there's an ongoing cleansing in it. In our whole battle with sin. So God's word is active. And God's word is a word that remains within us.

And that's what Jesus is saying here. The great proof is that if you abide in my word. It's one of the great words in the Bible, abiding.

[19 : 16] It's one of the things that we will do with regard to glory. We will abide. Never go out. And when God's word comes, when the good seed comes into your soul, it abides forever.

Nothing and no one, not even all the forces of hell, can pluck that seed out once it is embedded in your soul.

But the proof of that word abiding in is you're continuing to follow the Lord. Let's pray. Lord our God, we give thanks for a wee while together.

We give thanks for your word. And we give thanks for all the different things that your word is to us and your word does for us. And we give thanks, O Lord, that we are being refreshed by your word and sometimes rebuked by your word.

Sometimes we're encouraged. Sometimes our hearts are full. Forgive us, Lord, for the many times when we don't heed your word in the way that we should.

[20 : 21] Forgive us, Lord, for the times when our own will takes over and we push your will aside. Oh, forgive us, Lord, for that. Help us, Lord, to follow you and that every day that we may begin the day with your word.

And that every day we may seek to have our lives shaped and molded by your word. May it be obvious to all around that your word abides within us.

Watch over us and we pray. Bless this congregation. We give thanks for it. We pray, Lord, that you will continue to uphold us and do us good. Take us to our home safely, we pray, cleansing us from our every sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to conclude.