

Abiding in Christ: The Key to Fruitbearing Pt 2

College Fall Retreat 2006

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If you are not already open to John chapter 15. And, again, the chapter breaks down into three sections. The first one deals with the believer's relationship to Jesus Christ and the keyword is? Abide. The second section deals with the believer's relationship to each other and the keyword is love. The third section deals with the believer's relationship to the world and we are to be a witness to the world while the world hates Jesus Christ and therefore, it hates us.

[?] we noticed that this entire passage is for believers only. In fact, if you came in late tonight and you have a handout now, you missed some of our earlier notes. When we are done tonight why don't you ask someone to fill it in, not fill you, but to use their notes for you to fill it in and get down some of these things.

And, again, this passage centers on the connection of abiding in Christ resulting in fruit bearing, not regarding salvation. [?] vineyard are underscored in verses one and two. The true vine is Jesus Christ, the vinedresser is God the Father and branches are genuine believers

We have seen the purpose of the branches is to bear fruit. There are those who are minus fruit, those who bear mere fruit. God then prunes them to bear more fruit and hopefully much fruit and then even maintain fruit over a period of time.

[?] we saw that in the New Testament fruit refers to at least six different things. And I believe that our Lord is somewhat generally vague here in John 15 in defining fruit because it would encompass all of these things as it sets forth how Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit is able to produce in our life that which is well pleasing to him by way of fruit.

Now I read this fictitious story of a man who was taking it easy, laying on the grass and looking up at the clouds. And as he was enjoying the scenery and identifying its shape he decided to talk to God. "God," he said, "how long is a million years?"

And God answered, "In my frame of reference it is about a minute."

The man asked, “God, how much is a million dollars?”

God answered, “Well, to me it’s a penny.”

The man then asked, “God, can I have a penny?”

And God answered, “In a minute.”

And using that time table let’s take less than a fraction of a second to devote the remainder of our time tonight in studying John chapter 15.

We begin, again, in verse one.

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Having looked at the three persons of the vineyard along with the whole purpose of the branches which is to bear fruit, it now leads us to discover the process of fruit bearing. And in these three verses three, four and five our Lord underscores two key concepts in the fruit bearing process.

First of all, if you are going to be a fruitful Christian you must recognize the necessity of cleansing from God’s Word. Verse three says, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

Now that cleansing, first of all, involves regeneration [?] as it says the water of the Word of God that we come to know the forgiveness of our sins. As our sins are washed away when we believe in Jesus Christ. And until you are regenerated or born again or saved or a child of God, you can’t bear fruit. You have to be in Christ first.

But along with that Jesus taught in John 13 the importance of the fact that there you only need a bath once and getting your things all forgiven. In your daily walk with the Lord you need to get your feet cleansed. In fact, if you just turn back a page or so to John 13 look with me at verse 10.

“Jesus said to him,” Simon Peter, “He who is bathed,” and that happens when you get saved. Your sins are washed away, “‘needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you,’ for He knew who would betray Him,” namely Judas, “therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’”

Now why did he say that? Because Judas was never saved. Judas was never cleaned from his sin. Judas was never a believer. Judas never received eternal life. Judas never had put his faith in Christ alone. He just went along for the ride. He was hoping to get in on the kingdom. And he was the one who carried the bag. He was the treasurer and he was pilfering from that bag.

And the Bible makes it clear that Judas was never saved. He is not someone who lost their salvation, there is no such thing. He was never saved.

But Jesus says in verse 10 that when you enter the family of God you get bathed. And if you have been saved you know that your sins have been washed away. You have been totally and completely and forever forgiven. And that is why you are able to go to heaven. But because in your daily walk with the Lord you still have a sin nature and there is still the world hugging on you and the God of this world who is the devil, who makes appeals to your flesh through the world to move in a direction that is not pleasing to the Lord and he defiles your brain even with wrong thinking. You need to be cleansed and that cleansing comes through two ways. One, it comes through taking in the Word of God. And that is why Jesus said in John 15, “Ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” And, thus, we need the cleansing effect of the Word of God in our life.

And if I could use an illustration it would be like you eating and you spilled something in your shirt and so what do you need? You need to put it in the wash machine and get it clean. You don't need a whole new shirt. You just need the spot removed. And in the same way when you are saved you don't lose your salvation, but you need to get the spot removed from your thinking and in your life and in your walk with the Lord. It comes through the Word of God.

And isn't it true? How many times because you have been open to the Word of God does the Lord use word to specify in your mind something in which you were thinking wrong? And by the time you are done you said, “I am so glad I came tonight and heard what I heard because I can see the world was shaping my thinking. I was thinking wrong here. I had the wrong value or the wrong perspective, the wrong response.”

So the cleansing comes from the Word. But also as God points out sin in our life as we sin and break fellowship with the Lord, cleansing comes when we confess our sins. 1 John 1:9. “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

And if we are going to have this abiding relationship with the Lord we need the Word of God and we need to admit when we have sinned against the Lord.

So having said that, let me just clarify something so you keep this in balance. I remember a believer from my church a number of years ago ran into someone and they asked him the question: What is the Spirit filled life?

And his reply was: The Spirit filled life is the sin confessed life.

Now I want you to think about that for a minute. That is a half truth [?] which will lead to an extreme and an imbalance that is terrible and I will tell you why. If the Spirit filled life is the sin confessed life, what are you going to focus on? Sin and confession. Is that the key to living the Christian life is focusing on your sin and confessing it or is it focusing on Jesus Christ and learning to abide in him and admitting when you don't?

And, you know, people who think the key to the Christian life is to keep sin confessed and that is where their focus is, they get really tired and they have what I call the Monday try harder Christian life. On Sunday morning they are challenged and they are convicted and, "You know, by God's grace I am going to change." And on Monday they roll up their sleeves and they try harder and they fail and they try harder and they fail and they confess and they confess and they just get so tired of confessing after a while they say, "Forget it."

Now God does want us to confess when we sin, but the key of the Christian life is not becoming the best confessor in town. In fact, what is emphasized in this passage is not confession of sin, though it is implied. What is emphasized in John 15 is abiding in Christ. And the key to abiding, as we are going to see, is learning to depend upon the Lord and to face [?] in the Christian life.

But, you know, as you think of even cleansing here, if I can go back here for a moment. What does God want to cleanse us from? He doesn't cleanse out the sin nature in our life. That would be nice, wouldn't it? You know, I only have three quarters of a sin nature now that I have been saved for five years and I am working on getting rid of another quarter or two in the next few.

Now, that sin nature you have will be with you until the day that you go home to be with the Lord and then when you go home that day you will lose it. That is one of the reasons heaven is heaven. No sin nature in Heaven. And as long as you have a sin nature, you are capable of sinning and that sin nature at times will tempt you and seek to pull you all over the universe if you let it. But thank God because of the cross of Christ and our identification with Christ and because of the power of the Holy Spirit we don't have to yield to sin nature any longer.

[?] cleansed [?] getting rid of the sin nature or getting rid of the world or getting rid of the devil, but learning to have victory over these things. But what does God want to cleanse us from? He wants to cleanse us from human view point. That is one of the things he wants to cleans us from, thinking like the world thinks. You see, when you get saved, you could... look at your brain for a moment when you get saved. You are probably very

glad I am saved. But if you had a spiritual x-ray a [?] a divine view point. All the rest is human viewpoint because that is the only way you could think before you are saved, like the unsaved think.

Do you know what I expect out of unbelievers? To live like unbelievers. I don't expect them to live like Christians. You know, in fact, today I had an incident with an unbeliever. I think he is an unbeliever. I don't know, but he was parking in front of my house and my house is in a no permit... you have to have a permit to park in front of it.

Well, he is a kid from Easton [?] all these kids from East drive their cars. They have so many cars they don't know where to park them any more so they start going up the avenues and parked in front of my house. I had one yesterday, too. So I put a nice little note on there on their windshield. "This is a private residence. You need a permit to park here. If you park here again I will tow you away. Thank you."

Well, the guy yesterday, he was, you know, he just took his note, got in his car and drove off. Well, the guy today—and he has parked there a few times I have noticed—he starts swearing... f-ing this and f-ing that and he gets in his car and he drives and he stops and he pulls it in reverse and gets down and sees me over there and, "Did you write this note?" And f-ing this and f-ing that and all this stuff. [?]

I said, "Well, you have to have a permit to park here."

What's the big deal? The whole life in the whole world rotated around him, you know.

I said, "Well, it's against the law and it's my right." And I should have gone to say, "And what makes you so arrogant to think you are the exception, dude," you know, but I didn't, you know. You know, instead I pulled out my... he looked like he was going to come forward. I pulled my out my cell phone, pressed 9-1-1. I was all ready, you know.

Lord, you have to undertake and police... that police car is two blocks away at [?] I know it is. I see it every day. It can be here in about 1 minute if I need it.

Now what is my whole point of this story?

Acting on human viewpoint. That guy whole... do you know what? I expected that unbeliever to act like an unbeliever. He was insulting. And, unfortunately, my poor little girl had to hear that. But I expect unbelievers to act unbelievers. That is why you need your cell phone to call police.

But once you are saved, the Spirit of God wants to take the Word of God and change your thinking, transform your thinking so you can begin to think like God thinks, differently. And then the unsaved guy whose locker or desk or whoever is next to you at school, you can think differently.

He wants to cleanse us from human viewpoint. He wants to cleanse us from self dependence. You know, that is one of our problems, isn't it? I can handle it. I'll take care of it.

And let me ask you. [?] see your life today, how many times did you go vertical? How many times did you depend on the Lord? How many times have you cast your care on him? How many times did you turn to him and say, "Lord, you know, I am just yielding myself to you here. I am depending"? And how many times did you stop and think, now based on the Word of God here is how the Lord would have me to think"?

You know, like that guy who was swearing at me, "Render not evil for evil." Don't start swearing back at him, you know. I mean how much went on invisibly, mentally, vertically, relationally with the Lord? Or do you just go through your life like a Christian Forest Gump today? You know, and you just went along and you did what you had to do, but if God was looking at how you were relating to him, you were living your life just like an unbeliever in self dependence. God wants to cleans us from that and we need the Word of God.

He wants to cleanse us at times from waste in our lives. [?] They may not be wrong in themselves, in fact, Kurt is going to point out in the parable of the four soils that soil three is a soil where the Word of God gets choked out of someone's life because it is the care's of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things choke the Word of God or weights in your life, weights. I am not talking about your waist either.

There's wrong priorities. There is legalistic thinking because you might be here tonight and you might in some ways say, "I want to hear the Word of God," but then when the Word of God challenges your thinking and seeks to correct your thinking and expose where you are thinking wrong, do you just grind on the inside or do you say, "Thank you, Lord. I needed to hear that. Thanks"? Or do you just get bugged.

You know, there are some believers. They come off... you know, they hear the Word of God. Oh, this is great. This is the greatest church. I just love it. And two weeks later they are gone. Where did you go? I heard someone bugs you.

So then they do and they wander around for a while. They check out other churches, especially they come back because they know this is where they can get fed and then they stay for a little while until they get bugged again and then they go again because internally in their mind it is basically tell me what I want to hear, not what I need to hear. And, you know, one of the things about learning the Word of God is we need to have a very humble attitude that says, "Lord, you know exactly what I need to hear." And the Word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

That is how when I got saved I knew there needed to be some changes in my life, but I thought it was a tune up. God says it was an overhaul and I had no idea because I was too

dumb to even know that until I started to learn the Word of God. And then I could remember when [?] was under teaching for a few months, maybe a year or something like that and he comes up to me after service and has Pastor Dennis, this is all I do is sin.

I said, “Oh, you will make a good pastor one day.”

No. What was happening was... you say, “Boy, what would that be?”

You know, what was happening was as he learned the Word of God he began to realize what the standard was in order to discern how he was screwing up in his thinking, in his words, in his actions. So the Lord was showing him what a spiritual mess he was apart from the Lord making those changes in his life.

And, you know, when you are humble and you know you are nothing and you know you can do nothing, you can welcome that when you know there is relief. And the relief is found in God teaching you how to abide in Christ, how to abide in Christ.

Has the Lord been humbling you lately? Has he been shattering your pride and self confidence? Is he showing you your sin and insufficiency? Has the Lord been making it obvious that you are living life on your terms or in your own strength? If so, the Lord has been pruning. He has been cleansing. And remember this. The gardener is never so near as when he is pruning. And the objective is so that you could abide in Christ, John 15 verse four.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

Now that word “abide” is the key word. So we need to define it. What do we mean? What does the New Testament mean by the word “to abide”? It literally means to remain, to stay, to rest in dependence here on Christ as your life.

Now just think for a moment of a branch and a vine. [?] stay dependent, connected to that vine so that the life of the vine can flow through the branch and produce fruit in the life of the branch. And in the same way the Lord just wants us to remain dependent on him.

Now the mood of this word abide is... every Greek verb has a mood to it. And the mood of abide is imperative. You know, by imperative it means this is a command.

Now let me just say something. Some people think that the Christian life by grace doesn't have any commands. If you think that, you don't understand the New Testament. The New Testament epistles are loaded with commands, but you need to understand that the only way the command can be fulfilled is by grace. It is by grace. In fact, you know, even in Acts 16:31 what must you do to be saved? The word believe is in the imperative mood. It is a command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

And the mood here is imperative. What is the point? This is a must. You cannot bear fruit unless you abide in Christ.

And, by the way, the good scholar Daniel Wallace says this, that this particular aorist tense of [?] means to make this your top priority. The idea is: make this your top priority. You will never see the fruit of the Holy Spirit produced in your life except by abiding in Christ. You will never live a life of Christ like character or purposeful praise or generous giving or effective evangelism or meaningful ministry, nor will you have a Christ honoring Christian conduct apart from consistently abiding in Christ.

If you are going to be a fruit bearing Christian, what is to be your top priority? To remain dependent on the Lord.

Now one day many of you would like to be married. You hope to be married. And when you get married, is your marriage to be your top priority? And the answer is no. It is to be the top human relationship. It is not to be your top priority. Your top priority in your life when you are married is to abide in Christ, to be filled with the Spirit, to walk in the light. For apart from that you will never be the kind of husband and the kind of wife God wants you to be.

And then kids come along and your life will never be the same. You know, after we had Ian, when we got Ian life was never the same.

You say, "Was he that bad?"

No, it is just that adding a child to your life, wow, to change your life. It changes your life. And if you are not careful, pretty soon you put all your focus on that little bambino that is in that crib. So the parents are there for hours drooling on his blanket because our whole occupied with little bambino.

And, you know, little bambino has no capability of perceiving the reality of the situation he is in. He thinks the whole world centers around him. And, as I said before, the life of a baby, very simple. Give him the milk. Take care of the results and they are happy, you know? That is the life of a baby. And if you are not careful you begin to think that is your priority. It is not your top priority. In fact, you know, the best thing you can do for your family is to put your marriage before your kids. And do you know the best thing you can do for your marriage is to put the Lord before your marriage because, "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it."

And sometimes I see couples who just get so wrapped up in themselves. They are a gruesome twosome. Their relationship with the Lord suffers. Their ministry towards others suffers and though, yes, they are to have this relationship with each the other, but when that becomes their whole focal point you just watch how pretty soon they become self consumed. And pretty soon they are consumed with things instead of people and the Word of God and the things that really matter. There is nothing wrong with things. But

life does not consist of the abundance of the things that you possess Jesus said in Luke 12 verse 15.

The top priority of your life is not to be your job. It is not to be your education. It is not even to be a witness for Jesus Christ. As important as witnessing is, that isn't your top priority. Your top priority Jesus says here is to abide in him. For without him you can do nothing by way of bearing fruit, that brings honor and glory to God and fulfills the things that we have mentioned before.

And so as you have an attitude in which [?] the grace of God, you are willing to yield to the Lord and saying, in essence, "Lord, I want to live on your terms." And you are willing, moment by moment to learn to respond to the Lord. Not that you are conscious of him every second, you are not. You know when... what I have been teaching here it sounds like every moment I am conscious of the Lord here. I am not. I am trying to think about the next sentence I am going to say. That is what I am thinking about.

But that doesn't mean I am not checking in with the Lord at times as well as not allowing anything to enter my life that would hinder that relationship with the Lord, my fellowship with him. It is an attitude of dependence.

See, God saved you, an act of believing. The Christian life involves an attitude of depending on the Lord. And I want you to think about this for a minute. Who is Jesus Christ to you as a believer? Well, first of all he is your Savior in whom you have trusted. Secondly, he is your Lord and who you are to yield to every day. You don't make him Lord to be saved. Lordship salvation is wrong. But once you are saved he is your Lord and you are to yield to him every day.

Thirdly, he is your life. He is your recourse for everything and that is what John 15 is teaching. And therefore you are to rely on him everyday.

Fourthly, he is your hope. He is coming again. And every man that has his hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure. And so you begin to orient your life, or the Lord begins to orient your life through the Spirit of God using the Word of God to factor Jesus Christ and the supernatural into the equation day after day after day after day.

In fact, notice there, again, in verse four.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

Notice that the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine. No more can you unless you abide in me. Very, very clear.

As a result of being saved you have a new position in Christ, a new identity in Christ. In fact, do you realize what happened when you were saved? It is not something you felt, but something that still God did. If you are saved, you had been separated from Jesus

Christ. When you were saved you were put into a relationship with him. God says, “As Christ was crucified on the cross, so were you now. As he was buried, so were you. As he was raised, so were you.” And you are a new creation in Christ and because you are, you are no longer bound to serve the sin nature, the world or the devil any longer. You now have the freedom in Christ to live by grace through the power of the Spirit and to have victory and growth and fruitfulness in your life.

But the only way you are going to enjoy that is by remaining dependent on the Lord and, thus, enjoying fellowship with him.

Now there is something I must point out here that is so important and it is in verse four.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Did you know that God never asks you to produce fruit in your life? He asks you to bear it.

Now just imagine for a moment a branch who is disconnected from the vine laying on the ground saying, “Fruit, fruit.”

You would say, “You are an idiot, branch. You are not going to bear fruit unless you stay connected to the vine. I don’t care how much you want to bear fruit, it won’t happen.”

And in the same way in your heart of hearts you might say, “I want my life to count for the Lord. I don’t want to be fruitless. I want to be a fruitful believer.”

And God says, “That is a good desire. That is [?] of the new nature.”

But unless you depend upon Jesus Christ and are enabled by the Holy Spirit, it will never come to pass. It will never happen in your life.

And you see what happens with Christians is a lot of times they say this. “I want to serve the Lord.” And so they just try their best to do their best.

And, you know, the Christian life isn’t a matter of trying your best to do your best. It is a matter of Jesus Christ living his life through you as you yield and depend upon him. And what a difference that makes.

Here is a little saying that I said over the years. It is helpful to remember. I try, I fail. I trust, he succeeds. Big difference. I try to live the Christian life, I fail. I trust, he succeeds.

Here is another one. You cannot live the Christian life. I cannot live the Christian life. It must be by faith in Jesus Christ. Just like you are unable to be saved from sin's penalty through your own efforts and your own works, you cannot be saved from sin's power through your own efforts and your own work.

In fact, let me show you some verses on this. Go with me, if you would, to 2 Corinthians chapter three and verse five.

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant.”

Notice, we are not sufficient of ourselves. Do you know, when it comes to living a Christian life, you know what? God already knows you can't do it. God already knows.

In fact, I will just show you. Give me three commands of the Bible. “Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.”

Do you think you can rejoice evermore? Do you think you pray without ceasing? In everything do you give thanks? Do you think you can do that in your own? No way. Never do it. Never do it.

But if you are abiding in the Lord and relating to him and enjoying your relationship to him, is it difficult to rejoice in the Lord when you know he is in control and he is directing your life? Is it difficult in everything to give thanks when you know he is sovereign and he has your best interest in mind? Is it difficult to pray without ceasing when you are relating to the Lord so that things are coming into your life, you keep casting them to him? It is not because God is doing it in your life. And, oh, it is so good how the Lord can do it.

And yet how much failure do we have to experience to learn that? Like Paul in Romans seven, “The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do.”

Now some believers hardly ever get to that point in their life because they never really want to do what the Lord wants to begin with? So they can't hardly say, “The things I want to do, I don't do,” because they don't really want to do them anyhow.

But some of you know first hand the failure of seeking to live the Christian life and yet failing because you didn't abide in Christ to do it. And, you know, there are a lot of ways out there that people try to utilize to try to get you to live the Christian life. I mean, I will give you a few illustrations. I could give you many.

Some churches have what we would call church covenants. In other words, let's say Cody wants to become a member of this church. And so in order to become a member of the church you need to sign on the dotted line. You sign on the dotted line. You promise to not smoke, drink, chew and date girls that do. You know, and...

And so you sign on the dotted line. Is that how you live the Christian life, by making some kind of promise to do those things?

First of all, some of those are areas of liberty. Secondly, the Christian life isn't lived by saying, "Oh, by the way, I did sign on that church covenant. I better not do that."

Is that living your life as unto the Lord? No, not at all.

Now here is another thing that is attempted in many churches. It is called to rededicate your life to Christ. You know, you are... the pastor is... you know, he is... a lot of times pastors want to see results so we just trust in the Lord to use his Word. And, you know, maybe he is a little insecure in his own ministry. He wants to see [?] the Lord really using me. So he gives this really [?] message, very convicting and everyone is really convicted and, you know, "[?] for Jesus Christ. I want you to come up and rededicate your life to Christ."

No. If someone is honest, I mean, the whole church should come up, you know. I mean, who doesn't have adjustments to make in their life, you know. The whole church should come up. In fact you should just say, "You stay there, I'll just turn this way, you know?"

But that is not it. Do you know what kids do when they rededicate their life to Christ? They just come up and it is the Monday morning try harder routine. They come up and they say, "You know, Lord, you know I just screwed up. I just want to rededicate my life to Christ here. I just want to rededicate my life to Christ."

You know what they are saying in their minds? I have blown it. I am just telling God I am going to try harder at this. That is what they are saying.

And do you know what? It is a recipe for failure.

When I was at Bible college they used to have these things. And, you know, I had this room mate next to me. I really liked the guy. He was very sincere. [?] the Lord, but very emotional and not real doctrinally grounded. And so as a result they would do this and guess what? He would come forward.

Watch Gary. There he goes. There he goes.

You know, the next time they have it, there he go again. Next time, there he goes again. There he goes again.

But [?]. You know. I just want to serve the Lord. Well, I know I want...

Obviously it is not working, you know? Try something else, you know?

Because he didn't know how to abide in Christ. And what he was really doing was just basically rededicating his flesh to the Lord. Instead of recognizing, you know what? I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer have to serve the flesh. I reckon myself dead to the sin nature, alive to God. I yield myself to the Lord, to walk by faith under the power of the Spirit of God because only the Lord can enable me and only the Lord can change me and only the Lord can produce fruit in me that is well pleasing to him. And I am no longer... I am not passive in the Christian life. I am actively seeking the Lord and depending on him, but I am not producing the Christian life. The Lord is producing it in me and for me.

In fact, you know, we know these two people that work up in this rescue mission up in Seward, Alaska and it is just a gold mine of opportunity and evangelism because these cruise ships come in and on this cruise ship they have hundreds of people. In fact they have up to like 600 people that just work on the boat, let alone the paying customers. And so they go down and they pick up people that want to get off the boat. And a lot of times they are from different nationalities and, you know, they are probably cheaply paid. And, you know, you would like a few hours away and they bring them up to the mission and they can make phone calls and get some home baked cookies and whatever and they seek to give them the gospel, and opportunity to do this.

Well, we know one of the gals that works there and this gal is very clear on the gospel. But not only is she clear on the gospel, but she is clear on learning to abide in Christ. And do you know what? As I have watched this over the years in here, she is the one who leads them all to the Lord. The other workers, they are not clear on the gospel and they don't know really how to abide in Christ. And they try hard, but she is the one... and she is just this frail 65 year old lady who doesn't look like she could hurt a flea, has a very soft voice. And she is just winning them to the Lord one after another after another.

She says, "I am afraid to even tell the rest of the crew how many God has saved because they didn't [?]."

What is her key, though? Her key she will tell you is she know she doesn't do it. She abides in the Lord and depends upon him to do it in her and through her. And she is the one God uses and they keep getting saved. And she sends us pictures sometimes, you know, of poor people that God saves and they are all giving her hugs or whatever you know, greatly used of the Lord.

It is not be rededicating your life to Christ. It is not by comparing your sins with other believers so that you think you are spiritual because your sins are more refined than theirs. That is what some Christians do, you know. Some people think, oh, the key is prayer. I just need to pray.

You know, [?] Hudson Taylor's spiritual secret and [?] know that he sun [?] China without him on his knees and, you know, if I could only set that alarm clock and get my flesh out of bed, I know I am going to be a fruitful believer. I just know it.

But, you know, you fail to realize prayer wasn't the key there. His dependence on the Lord was the key. That is why he prayed. And, furthermore, there is nothing in the Bible that says you have got to be up a tree.

In fact, you know, I remember reading Hudson Taylor's spiritual secret years ago. I read that and [?] got to get up early, got to have devotions early, you know, early, you know and whatever. Then I realized that he got up at three, had his devotions and he went back to bed, you know. Nobody ever told me that, you know.

Now, am I downplaying the importance of devotion? No, our devotional life is very important. But the key isn't some mountain top experience and getting up at three. You know, he got up at three and prayed because he was walking with the Lord. He didn't do that to be spiritual. It was the result.

Some people think you just have to have certain experiences, you know, speaking in tongues, being slain in the Spirit, holy laughter. Here is something you will hear in charismatic circles. Here is the one of the [?] you have heard me talk about this a little, a holy vomit. Now that is one of the new ones. You know, you are really filled with the Holy Spirit and you vomit.

I think, oh, I had holy vomit before it ever hit the big time, you know, for years before I preached, before I... you know, I hated putting the [?] on so I put a [?] on and I would puke before I preached. I was filled with the Spirit. That was holy vomit, I guess. I just didn't know it. I could have told Benny Hinn about it or something, you know, and cashed in on this thing a little more.

You know, holy vomit or Holy Spirit glue. That is one, too, you know. You are really filled with the Spirit. You know, you are going to fall on the floor and you are not going to be able to get up for hours, they say, because some force is keeping you down.

Now where is that in the Bible? You can't find that anywhere in the Bible. As I said before, you know where you find that in the Bible? Right after the maps, right after the maps. You find it nowhere in the Bible.

And I will tell you this. If some force is keeping me down I would be scared out of my boots because I can tell you this. That is demonic. That isn't of God. Where do you find that in the Bible?

You know, I was wrestling with Michael the arch angel the other night and...

You know, [?] find that in the Bible, you know. The key, again, is abiding.

Here is another one. Some people think that you are spiritual by ritualism. By that I mean this. They say, "You know, if you only get baptized." If you are baptized then you are spiritual, you serve the Lord as a disciple, something like that.

You know what? That is not what the Bible teaches. You are not spiritual by your works.

Now, I am not against baptism. I believe it is biblical. I believe it is commanded in Scripture. I believe that believers have the privilege and opportunity and even responsibility to do that. But it doesn't make you saved and it doesn't make you spiritual. It is just a means of publicly proclaiming that you are a believer who has been identified with Christ.

But the same is true with the Lord's Supper. You know, some people think—in fact, I have talked to some believers—they say, this is Plymouth Brethren type, they say, "How often do you celebrate the Lord's Supper?"

Well, our church celebrates it once a month.

Oh, wow. Well, we do it every week.

Oh, really?

Yeah, in fact, Paul says as often as you do it and he meant every week.

I said, "Well, that's not in my Bible, you know."

So you do it every week?

Yeah, yeah.

So you think if we did it every week we would be spiritual? Well, if that is true, why does the Bible say to the Corinthians who were doing it that God was taking some of them home for doing it and that they needed to examine themselves before they did it because they were doing it in an unworthy way? So I guess doing it doesn't make you spiritual does it? That is why we are to examine ourselves before we do it because it is a time to simply remember the Lord and what he has done for us. We are not saved by it and we are not spiritual because of it. We are not saved or spiritual by law keeping.

Here is one: Christian exorcism. This is one that you will hear about in our day. You know, there are some people who will say this, that if you are a believer you can be indwelt by a demon yet. Now, not influenced, actually indwelt.

In fact, let's illustrate it for a minute. Here I will take Jason.

I looked into one of these spiritual warfare experts that came to Duluth and he said many things that were true. I mean, if you didn't know your Bible you could have swallowed that whole thing, hook, line and sinker.

He said, “You know, if you have a particular perturbing pattern of sin in your life that you can’t seem to get rid of, Jason, it is probably because you have got a demon that is indwelling you. You just need to get rid of that demon.”

But Jesus is God. Yeah, I have got a demon, yeah. My roommate, Bernie.

No, no. I am not talking about that. No, not about Bernie. There is a demon in your life. You need to get that exercise out of your life.

Let me ask you a question. What passage in the New Testament teaches that a believer can be demon indwelt? There are none. In fact your body is the temple of who? And he puts outside the door, “No Vacancy.”

But over and above that, what passage in the New Testament teaches you how to exorcise demons out of anybody, let alone a believer? And what spiritual gift do you find in the New Testament to exorcise demons out of people?

You don’t.

Now, can an unbeliever be indwelt by a demon? Yeah. I think I have met a few.

[?]

But as a believer it is not a matter of getting some demon out of you or any of those kind of things.

Now here is another one that is big in some circles, I call it small group accountability. In other words, we have a little accountability group going to check up on one another.

Now that is not to say we shouldn’t have a concern one for another about how we are doing and even at times warn the unruly, you know. The Bible does say warn the unruly, the to help the weak and such.

But here is the accountability group. It kind of goes like this. You know, Jim, how are you doing with that sin this week, you know? And I know you just have this real problem with whatever, you know. And that they do is, see, people may ask [?] we met every Saturday and every Saturday we would ask each other hard questions and we would ask them about, you know, your particular sin problem in your life and how did you do this week? You know?

Now, where do you find that in Scripture? You know, the spiritual buddy system, you know. [?] you have got to have a buddy, right? Have a buddy at the lake. You know, and some people, you know, you need buddies in your life. Like and he is just checking up on you, you know.

No, Jim already has a buddy. It is called Jolene. That's his buddy for life, right? And on top of that he has the Holy Spirit and he is to do what he does as unto the Lord, right?

[?] in the buddy system approach it kind of goes like this. Jason says, "You know, Brian, you know, I am really convicted about this sin in my life. I am not going to do that because they are going to ask me this Saturday about whether I am doing it or not."

So when you start doing that, you do it as unto who? Unto the Lord? You do it as unto your buddy, right? Do it as unto your buddy.

You know, and so let's say Jason has a problem with drinking, you know, it is like the drink. You know, and so as a result he is going by the bar and he is thinking, "Oh, I am meeting with [?] Saturday. [?] is going to ask me, you know, I was with Jim Beam this week. So, you know, I just pulled out my pencil and I just bit hard. You know and I made it past that bar, you know."

And then you say, "Well, Jason, did you really enjoy...?"

Hated every moment of it, you know.

And is this the Christian life? Now what are we talking about here? That is like the unbeliever's approach to it.

Do you know why they have to have AA meetings six time a week? Because they don't know anything about living the Christian life by grace. They have got to have their buddy system. And then, what [?] they get together? They get together and fellowship around what? How much they didn't drink this week. And what did they do before they got saved? They fellowshiped what they drank that week.

This is not how we live the Christian life. And, you know, a lot of what is out there by way of Christian living is just human viewpoint, effort to try to curb the flesh and limit its expression instead of having true victory from the Lord.

Now [?] as we go back to... oh, we want to go to Galatians chapter two. We are almost done here, Galatians chapter two and verse 20.

Now here is a great verse to memorize. Do you know it? I know it in the King James. I don't know it in the New King James as well.

Verse 20. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, in this human body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Isn't that a great verse? I am living the Christian life?

Isn't it good to know it is God who is working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Philippians 2:13? Isn't it good to know that faithful is he who calls you who

also will do it, 1 Thessalonians 5:24? Isn't it good to know I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, Philippians 4:13? Isn't it good to know he who has begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Christ, Philippians 1:6? So very good.

And if you go back to John 15, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

What do mean I can do nothing?

You can do nothing by way of bearing fruit in your life unless you abide in the vine.

Well, why is that?

Because of three reasons. Number one, because we are nothing, Galatians 6:3. "He who sees himself to be something when he is nothing, deceives himself.

Number two, because without Christ we can do nothing. And, number three, because in this way Christ must be our all in all.

Ever see this, what a Christian is? Did you ever see this little acronym for Christian? Christian is: Christ is all and I am nothing.

And that is how God wants to get us to think. I am just a branch. I don't produce the fruit. I bear it. I just need to keep abiding in the Lord. He will do it in my life. And over the process of time there will be growth and there will be fruitfulness and there will be products that come from abiding. What are those products?

Verse six. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."

The burning here has nothing to do with hell. It has to do with what you people do with fruitless branches. They burn them because they are good for nothing. And in your Christian life when you fail to abide in the Lord that will all be burned at the judgment seat of Christ as you are wasting your life instead of bearing fruit.

Verse seven. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

The first product that comes from abiding is there will be fruit in our lives. Secondly, there will be answered prayer as you have an attitude, depending on the Lord, yielding to him, responding to him and allowing his Word to dwell in you. Then you can pray according to the Word of God and God can answer.

Can I ask you a question? Do you ever see answers to prayer in your life? Do you ever see some really dynamic answers to prayer in your life? You know, God has answered

some just amazing prayers in my life recently, amazing. There is no way to explain it but God. You know, some people think that they are answers to prayer. It is really the law of averages. They just happened to hit it right one day, you know.

When you are really abiding in the Lord and you are praying according to his will, you are going to see answers to prayer in your life. And, thirdly, there will be glory to God. There will be glory to God.

Verse eight. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be or prove to be My disciples.”

God will be glorified in your life.

And, you know, I was sharing with our church here just in the last month or so, you know, we have a number of people that have been recently saved that are coming out to our church and it is very exciting. It is exciting when people get saved. You know, when people get saved they get saved with all the baggage they have. They get saved with their background, their hangups, their human viewpoints, their sin patterns. They get saved just as they are and God accepts them just as they are. But they have got a lot of growing to do.

And, you know, sometimes the legalist sits back and they are critical and, you know, so and so, you know, do you see that person who just came in our church? You know, looks like he got... came face to face with a nail gun or something, you know, with so many earrings all over the place and, you know, and the next person, you know, they are just as bad and whatever and they are just critical. They are failing to see there is a far bigger issue here.

What is going on in the person's heart?

And so I said to our church, I said, “You know with all the spots and wrinkles we have in our church...” And we all have them, including the pastor. I said, “But if you only know how far God has brought us, if you only knew the pit from which we were dug. If you only knew the family backgrounds and abuse, hang ups and problems and difficulties and legalistic background and licentious backgrounds and... if you only knew how far God has brought us by his grace and how many pitfalls he has saved us from already.”

We are, you know, a project that God isn't done with yet. And, you know, it is so exciting to see how God is changing the lives of people. And he is the only one who can do it. And when he does it and they bear fruit, do you know what? They will walk around saying, “Look at what God is doing.”

Do you know this person right here? Do you know what their background is? Do you know what they are like? Look what God is doing in their life.

“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Anything supernatural going on in your life? Any fruit being produced in your life? Any real change going on in your life on the inside in a positive way? Any way that God has come along and said, “Well, look at what God is doing. [?]”

And, you know, when it is all said and done they say, “Well, I am really impressed with the fruit.”

Oh, no. I am impressed with who? The vine, for without him you could do nothing.

Let’s pray.

Father, thank you for the great and gracious God that you are and that he who hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Oh, may every spiritual failure in our life remind us that we can’t live the Christian life, that you must live it in us and through us as we abide in Christ and find him to be our all in all.

And, Father, we just thank you so much for giving to us your Son, not only his sacrifice on the cross for our sins, but through that death providing salvation from the very power of sin and one day from its very presence. Thank you for your patience with us. Thank you how you want to lift up believers that are minus fruit, that you want to prune believers that are bearing fruit, that we might have no fruit and much fruit and maintain fruit, fruit that would bring honor and glory to you, blessing to others and real joy to our own lives. Father, I just want to pray for every believer here tonight, that they would just take to heart what is said and as this will be developed even further in the studies to come, that, Father, you might use it in their hearts to shape their thinking of how to live the Christian life on your terms by grace in Jesus’ name. Amen.