

## **John 15:1-10**

### ***Staying Close To Christ***

The thrust of Christ's preaching was both practical and profound.

Christ taught people in such a way that they could relate to what he was saying. "I am the vine and ye are the branches," illustrates just how powerfully Christ used common and natural things, things that we can observe in nature, to make his point regarding faith in Him.

We know from our own observations that branches are completely dependent on the vine for life. We just have to go outside and snap a branch off a tree. What happens? It soon dies.

Without the connection to the vine, a broken branch will eventually wither away and die.

The same thing is true regarding a relationship with Jesus Christ. The connection between the vine and the branches illustrates the vital union that exists between Christ and His disciples.

A. W. Pink writes, “The union of Christ to His people is an amazing subject. It is an eternal union; it is an union made and enjoyed in time; it is an union, which will be openly, and manifestively declared, in all its glory and perfection in the latter day; it is a grace union; it is also a glory union.

Because of our union with Christ we have not only a valid title or right to draw nigh unto God but a personal fitness. Our very life is hid with Christ in God, so that before we can perish, He must perish. What is yet more blessed, the Father loves us as He loves Christ.”

The illustration of the vine and branches is a simple and practical example of the nature of faith. If we are not connected to Jesus Christ then we will die.

In addition to being practical in his teaching, Christ was also profound in what he said. The content of Christ’s teaching left people declare, “No man ever spake like this man.”

An example of Christ’s sublime and profound teaching is found in the statement in John 15:4, “Abide in Me.”

The Lord Jesus uses the word *abide* 7 times in John 15:1-10. Christ emphasizes the importance of following, trusting, and abiding in Him.

What does it mean to abide in someone or something?

- Illustration of the vine and branches
- Illustration of a baby in the womb of a mother

*Abide in Christ* means remaining united to Him by a living faith. We are to live a life of dependence on the Vine, Jesus Christ, by constantly exercising faith in Him, and by obeying His commandments.

*Abide in Christ* means staying as close to Him as you can. What a profound truth!

Think of the impact these words would have had on people abiding in riches.

*Abide in me and not in your riches!*

Wasn't that the message of Christ to the rich young ruler.

But the rich man would not abide in Christ and we read in Mark 10:22, “And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”

How many people today abide in riches?

Christ’s words would have left an indelible impression on very religious Jews.

*Abide in me and not in dead religion.*

You can almost here the cry of protest from practicing Jews, “We can’t abide in Jesus. We must abide in Moses and the prophets!”

But Moses and the prophets wrote concerning Christ.

We read in Luke 24:44, “...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

How many people today abide in religion, and not in Jesus Christ for salvation?

Abide in Christ applies to those going through trials and tribulations.

*Abide in me and not in grief and sorrow.*

We read in Matthew 8:22, “Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead? What a seemingly cruel thing to say. What was He teaching? Again, it has to do with abiding in Christ.

Albert Barnes writes, “The Saviour had a thorough knowledge of human nature. The arrangements for the funeral; the preparation of mounting apparel; and the depth of sorrow in such cases, divert the mind from its sins, and its personal need of a Saviour; and hence few persons are awakened or converted as the result of death in a family. The case here was a strong one. It was as strong as can well be conceived.

And the Saviour meant to teach by this, that nothing is to be allowed to divert the mind from Him; nothing to be an excuse for not following him. Not even the death of a father, and the sorrows of an afflicted family, are to be suffered to lead a man to put off the purpose to be a Christian.”

We read the words of Jesus Christ in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

How many people today drown their souls in misery because of trials and sorrows and never come to Christ?

It doesn't matter who we are, where we are, or what we or are going through; we must all abide in Jesus Christ for life and salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us in John 15 that we must stay close to Him. Therefore, the title of my message is, *Staying Close To Christ*. Let us consider three things today from this passage.

**1. *Purpose staying close to Christ.*** We must purpose in our hearts to stay close to the Lord Jesus.

We purpose to do things every day. We purpose to wake up. We purpose to work. We purpose to eat. We purpose to do all kinds of different things.

In all of purposing and planning in a day do we purpose staying close to Christ?

How much time during the day do we really spend thinking about Christ on purpose?

“I purpose to follow the Lord today.”

“I purpose to walk with my Savior.

I purpose, “Not my will but Thy will be done.”

We read in the Gospel of Luke of a woman who purposed to stay close to the Lord. Please turn with me to Luke chapter 10. (read verses 38-42).

Notice the verse 42, “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath **chosen** that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Mary purposed in her heart to fellowship with Christ.

She realized that there is a time to hear and there is a time to do. Martha was busy doing and doing and this produced a sour fussing in her.

“Mary hath chosen or purposed that good part, which shall not be taken away from her, ” observed the Lord.

*The good portion.* The best dish on the table was fellowship with Jesus Christ. This is the spiritual application of the metaphor of the dishes on the table. Salvation is not "the good portion" for Martha had that also.

It was communion with the Lord, and Mary purposed to fellowship with Christ.

Christ reproves Martha for that fussy fretfulness which attempts many unneeded things, and ends in worry and fault-finding. But Christ commends Mary for staying close to Him.

Moses was also a person who purposed staying close to Christ.

Read Hebrews 11:25-27

Moses could have been Pharaoh of Egypt, and the most powerful ruler of that day.



Moses saw that if he cast in his lot with Israel, he must expect trials. They were poor, and crushed, and despised--a nation of slaves. If he identified himself with them, his condition would be like theirs--one of great trial; if he sought to elevate and deliver them, such an undertaking could not but be one of great peril and hardship.

Trial and danger, want and care, would follow Moses, and he knew that an effort to rescue Israel from bondage must be attended with the sacrifice of all the comforts and honors which he enjoyed at court. Yet he "chose" this."

We must purpose to stay close to Christ in our lives because we are prone to wander like sheep. We are like sheep that go astray. Jesus is the good shepherd.

We must stay close to Him unless we become vulnerable to the attacks of predators like wolves and lions.

We must purpose staying close to Christ.

## **2. Enjoy staying close to Christ.**

We must enjoy staying close to Christ.

We read in John 15:4, “Abide in me, and I in you.”

The union between Christ and his disciples is mutual.

They abide in him by faith, love, and obedience. He abides in them through the Holy Spirit, as the source of their spiritual life, light, and strength.

What a joy and comfort to know the truth of Philippians 2:13, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Christ teaches in John 15:4 that if we remain attached to Him, He will remain with us, and will teach, guide, and comfort us.

While we are united to him by a living faith, strength flows from Him to us, and we receive help as we need it.

We abide in Christ and therefore Christ will never leave us nor forsakes. No never, never, never!

Believers in Christ enjoy staying close to the Lord because we are his and He is ours. We enjoy staying close to Christ on the Lord's Day. We enjoy staying close to Christ in prayer. We enjoy staying close to Christ because we love Him.

Staying close to Christ makes us holy.

Staying close to Christ makes us strong.

If you can't enjoy staying close to Christ now then how do you expect to enjoy staying close to Christ in heaven forever and ever.

What a joy to be gathered here today in the Lord's House and worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the beauty of holiness. What is the Lord's Day but a foretaste and preview of what heaven will be like!

If you are here today and you are not abiding in Christ, not staying close to Him, then there is a sober warning to you in John 15:6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

This verse refers to a person who is not truly united to Christ by faith, and does not live with a continual sense of his dependence on him.

This doubtless refers to those who are professors of religion, but who have never known anything of true and real connection with him.

*They are cast forth* into the fire. It means they who did not abide in Christ will go unwillingly into eternal fire.

Hell is a place of punishment and not rehabilitation.

Those who do not abide in Christ will be punished for their sins in the lake of fire. Hell is not a place where people will be made better then released. There is no parole in hell. There is no early release for good behavior.

The one proper use of the vine is to bear fruit; failing this, it is good for one other thing--fuel.

We read in Ezekiel 15:1-5, “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?”

We read of a sobering passage in Jude verse 7, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

What is this verse teaching?

There are people right now as I speak suffering in hell for their sins.

I enjoy staying close to Christ because Christ saves me from hell and He has gone to prepare a place for me in heaven.

If you are here today and not abiding in Christ then come to Christ. If you are backslidden in your heart toward the things of the Lord then return to the Lord and stay close to Him.

### **3. Practice staying close to Christ.**

Abiding in Christ includes much more than spending a few hours of coming to church on Sunday and Wednesday. We must practice staying close to Christ all the time, and everywhere we go.

We must stay close to Christ in trials.

We must stay close to Christ in prosperity.

We must stay close to Christ in private.

- Watching television
- Surfing the Internet
- Prayer closet
- Reading the Bible

We must stay close to Christ in public.

- At church
- At work
- At the store

If we abide in Christ and stay close to Him then what should our lives look like? It will look like a fruit orchard. There will be fruit everywhere in our lives.

We read in John 15:5, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth **much fruit**: for without me ye can do nothing.”

Show me a Christian that is flourishing, who shines brightly for Christ and who demonstrates in his life that he’s vibrant in his walk with the Lord.

There is a vitality about him that shows that he not only believes in Christ, but he knows Christ and walks with Christ and loves to serve Christ. He abides in Christ and keeps close communion with Christ.

Show me that kind of Christian and I'll show you a Christian who spends time in prayer and time in the word of God. He discovers and rediscovers constantly that the word of God is a living word.

He doesn't simply learn lessons from God's word but God himself speaks to him in the learning of those lessons.

We must practice staying close to Christ because we can do nothing without Him. We will bear no fruit in our life without Christ.

Spurgeon writes, "Nothing! mark the word. He does not say "only a little," but nothing."

The union of the branch to the vine by a vital communication is no more essential to its life and fruitfulness, than the union of souls to Christ, by receiving and trusting in him as the Saviour, is to their holiness and happiness.

Is staying close to Christ your steady practice?

In closing, Christ uses the word *abide* seven times in John 15:1-10. Abide suggests a close and vital connection like a vine is to a branch. Abide is a fitting word to describe the relationship between Christ and His disciples. Abide in Christ means *purpose* staying close to Him, *enjoy* staying close to Him, and *practice* staying close to Him. May we abide in Christ and stay close to Him. Let us pray.