

# (Radical Jesus) 33 Radical Abiding

by Glenn Meldrum

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*Radical abiding is the normal Christian experience of living a deep relationship with Jesus, where we die to our old sinful nature and rise to a new life in Christ.*

**Duration:** 26:29

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 22:37-40, Luke 10:2, Luke 18:1, John 5:1-9, John 15:4-5

**Topics:** "Abiding"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses an illustration to help us understand the concept of what Jesus did for us. He compares it to being the firstborn son of a king, destined to be the next king. The prince has only known a life of luxury and privilege, unaware of the struggles of the common people in his kingdom. However, one day he is captured and sold into slavery, experiencing a complete reversal of his circumstances. Through this story, the speaker emphasizes the radical nature of abiding in Christ and the transformative power of Jesus in our lives.

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## Transcript

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Prayer has been the subject of our study for the last four weeks. We ended that section on prayer and our continuing study on the radical Jesus by learning that prayer is totally relational, which is a very beautiful thought. This means that prayer is not about reading formal written prayers or repetitiously saying the same thing over and over again, because prayer is all about fellowship with God.

And since prayer is about fellowshiping with God, such a profound and glorious relationship with God is only available to true followers of Jesus. The primary prayer that the Lord hears from people that are not following Him is the prayer of repentance that leads them to salvation. The Lord has called us into a love relationship as between a father and his beloved children.

He wants us near to Him so we can know the depths and heights and riches of His love. This led us to look at the wonderful idea of enjoying God. There is no one more thrilling than Almighty God, and when people enter into fellowship with Him, they can experience what it means to enjoy God.

This privilege of enjoying God is offered to every true believer and is available to all those that would pursue Jesus with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. I closed last week's lesson on prayer by looking at the true condition of prayerless Christians. As I stated last week, the phrase prayerless Christians are an oxymoron because they do not exist in the real world.

They only exist in the minds of those who think that they can be prayerless while being Christian. This is a very dangerous place to be, to think that you are a Christian when in reality you are not. This was a condition of the Pharisees in Christ's day, and it is still a spiritual malady that affects many religious people today.

Make sure that you are not part of that crowd. Before I get into today's teaching, I would like to briefly mention my ministry as an evangelist. For the last 18 years, I have ministered as an evangelist.

I speak all over the U.S. and even minister in some other countries when the Lord opens those doors. For me to minister at your church, ministry conference, or discipleship ministry, all you need to do is invite me. If you are a pastor, then please give me a call so we can talk it over and work out the simple details.

You can find my phone number on my website. Just go to the contact page. If you are not a pastor, then lovingly and kindly ask your pastor to have me minister at your church.

Then leave the decision to him. Ask him to go to my website and listen to one of my sermons like The Church Triumphant. This way he can get a feel for my preaching, which is different than how I teach on the Radical Truth Podcast.

Then have him call me and we will see what the will of the Lord is in this matter. Now let's begin today's teaching, which starts a new section on radical abiding. After I finished writing the first draft of my book, The Radical Jesus, I knew something was missing from it, but I could not put my finger on it.

I wanted to do a chapter on abiding in Christ, but did not feel I had a strong enough grip on its biblical truth to effectively write a chapter on the subject. I did not want to write something on abiding in the same way that most preachers and teachers present it. If Jesus is radical, and as a result the biblical faith is radical, then abiding must be radical as well.

But I did not understand it at that point. Through much prayer on this subject, the Lord finally got through my thick head and helped me to understand a little bit more the radical nature of abiding in Christ. As he opened my eyes to this marvelous truth, I began to get a better glimpse of how wonderful and radical Jesus is and of the life of abiding that he is calling his people to live out.

This subject has become one I now love preaching about, not because I have become an expert in the subject, but because I am awestruck at how wonderful Jesus is to his people. According to the scriptures, abiding in Christ is clearly revealed as what should be the normal Christian experience. It should be what every true follower of Jesus is striving to live out with all that is within them.

As we will see later in this section on abiding, that if people do not genuinely abide in Christ, then they do not belong to Jesus. We will see that abiding in Christ is not an option, but a mandatory part of being a true follower of Jesus. Those that do not abide in Christ, according to his definition, will not make heaven their home, but I will deal with this more later.

Abiding in Christ is also the prize of the Christian life, because abiding is all about a deep relationship with Jesus. We just finished four weeks of examining the radical nature of true prayer, and in that section of our study I stated that prayer is all about relationship with God. Well, the entire Christian life is all about relationship with God, and each dimension is a part of the entire equation.

Learning how to abide in Christ is where genuine spiritual maturity begins, and this is where the faith becomes a real joy. When people become intimate followers of Jesus, they leave behind their old sinful way of life and enter into a new life in Christ. They come out of the darkness of the world into the glorious light of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

They become a new creature in Christ, where the old life passes away so that the new life can begin. They are then adopted by Christ and become heirs with him in the only things that really matter. By entering into this new life in Christ, they must leave behind the rebellious, self-sufficient mindset that is the driving force behind the sinful nature, so that they can know the joy and security of abiding in Christ.

We have seen that Jesus is the perfect model and standard for every facet of the Christian life, and this is true for abiding as well. By studying Jesus and how he abode in the Father, we will learn what abiding means and what it looks like when it is lived out. To help us understand the biblical principle of abiding, I want to look at water baptism.

Now, this may seem like a strange place to start examining the subject of abiding, but as the study progresses, it will make sense. The first thing I want to do is briefly look at what the Scriptures teach about water baptism. This is important because there are a lot of opinions and doctrines about water baptism that are not biblically sound, so we need to know what the Word really teaches on the matter.

Now, it is not my ambition to settle the doctrinal differences on water baptism, because that just cannot be done. I'm going to ask that you lay aside your denominational teaching to look at Scripture, and then let Scripture settle the matter in your heart and mind. And it is not my ambition to do a thorough teaching on water baptism, because I am actually teaching what it means to abide in Christ.

Paul told us in Romans 6, verses 3 and 4, Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. The first thing that we can conclude from what Paul said is that water baptism was designed by the Lord to be a symbol of death and resurrection. This is very important to this teaching on abiding.

The symbolism of water baptism represents a spiritual reality. When people truly become Christian, they die to their old way of life, their sinful practices, the idols of their heart and mind, and to the sins that they have loved. There is no resurrection power until there is authentic death.

We know this principle to be true in the world of mortal men, that before people can go to heaven, they have to die. To be partially dead is not good enough. The person must be fully dead, or he or she will not experience resurrection power.

So the reality of death and resurrection corresponds with what is true in the spiritual realm. Until we are willing to die to our sinful nature, there can be no resurrection power to live the victorious Christian life. I am not going to take the time to lay out all the arguments, but nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to baptize babies.

There is not one single legitimate first to back up that practice. Jesus told us after His resurrection, therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Discipleship is a choice of the will, where a person chooses to turn from a life of sin and follow Jesus.

They are saved by grace through faith. A baby does not have that ability to make the choice to follow Jesus or to place their faith in Him. Child baptism is a meaningless act, because water baptism was designed by God to be a testimony of what has taken place in the life of a person that has died to the life of sin and are now risen with Christ in a new life.

Some claim that infant baptism is needed because of the stain of original sin that is upon the entire human race. But here again, there is not one verse that can back up the need for infant baptism. Now if the eternity of babies was at stake, is it not reasonable to think that the Lord would have made a big deal over this in Scripture? But He did not, since babies do not have the capacity to understand that they are sinners, and they do not have the ability to repent.

One more thing before I move on. Water baptism cannot save a person, it cannot save babies, and it cannot save adults, and those who preach such things are preaching error. God designed water baptism to be a testimony of the salvation that has already taken place in the soul.

If baptism can save, then people can be saved by works, but such an idea is thoroughly condemned by Paul. It is by grace we are saved through faith, but I do not have time today to get into that discussion any further. So let me reiterate what I just said.

Water baptism is the testimony about how a person has died to his or her past life and has been raised through resurrection power to live in Christ. Now we come to a very difficult problem. If water baptism is about death and resurrection, then why did Jesus get baptized in water by John the Baptist at the inauguration of his earthly ministry? Many commentators dance around this issue because it is a sticky one.

They do not want to commit themselves to a wrong view, so they think no view is better, and at times this is the best course. Here we face another point about water baptism, that it is total submission in water, not sprinkling, because sprinkling misses the entire symbolism that surrounds the act. Going underwater symbolizes death, while rising out of the water symbolizes resurrection.

The death relates to our dying to our sinful nature, while resurrection signifies life like I read a little bit ago in Romans 6, 4. Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. There was not a point in the life of Christ where he began to abide in the Father as if he was living for a time without abiding in the Father. Jesus always dwelt in perfect fellowship with the Father, so his baptism then begs the question, why did Jesus get baptized? Something significant happened at Christ's baptism that made it vital that he performed that ritual.

The historical account of Christ's baptism begins in Matthew 3, verse 13. Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. This was a purposeful act of Jesus for a very specific reason, so it is important that we learn that reason.

Now remember, the ritual of water baptism is just that, a ritual. It is a testimony of the reality that already took place in the life, and this is true with Jesus as well. The story of Christ's baptism continues in Matthew

3, verses 13-15.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me? Jesus replied, Let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill our righteousness.

Then John consented. When Jesus told John, It is proper for us to fulfill our righteousness, we do not have an Old Testament verse that tells us what Jesus meant. Nevertheless, John understood Jesus' meaning, which caused him to submit to Jesus' request.

The primary reason why Jesus got baptized was to be an example to us about what baptism symbolizes, and by understanding this, we will understand a little more clearly of what it means to become a true follower of Jesus. Since baptism is a symbol of death and resurrection, what did Jesus die to, and what did he raise to? Before I answer that question, I need to make a couple of very important points. Jesus was sinless, so he did not have the need to be baptized as a symbol that he was dying to sin.

Nor did Jesus have a sin nature, so his baptism had nothing to do with symbolizing that he had to die to that. Jesus was perfect, without sin, and without a sin nature. Listen closely to the answer of what Jesus died to, so that you can grasp its full meaning.

Jesus died to his right to operate in his divine rights as God, and this is a very important truth to know. Some commentators claim that Jesus died to certain of his divine attributes, but logically speaking, that is not possible, because that would mean that Jesus would become less than God. Jesus was 100% God and 100% man, and there never was a time that Jesus was less than 100% God.

Jesus made the choice to not operate in his divine rights as God so he could live a fully human life. When we look at Christ's humanity, we see what mankind was originally created to be, what we were created to be. Sin has so marred what we were created to be that only a vestige of the original remains.

We are now a twisted mess of sin, rebellion, and foolishness. Jesus' death and resurrection is the way by which we can be restored to our original creation. So Christ's baptism was a symbol of his relinquishing his right to act in his essential deity and accept the limitations of his humanity.

I do not think we can really lay hold of the implications that come out of this divine work, since it is beyond our capacity to understand, but it sure is fun to try. For the entirety of Christ's earthly life and ministry, he surrendered the use of his divine rights to the Father so that he could be the Lamb of God to atone for the sins of mankind. He also clearly revealed what it means to be human and Christian according to God's original intent for mankind.

We must now answer the second half of why Jesus was baptized in water by John. The first reason is that he died to his right to operate in his divine right as God so that he could live a truly human life. But what does the resurrection part of baptism symbolize with Jesus? He rose in total, absolute submission to the Father.

Take a look at the life of Christ, and you will see that everything he did was done according to the will of the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Total submission to the Father is what defined the entire life of Jesus, but it is most clearly seen during his ministry years because that is what was recorded in Gospel history. Jesus exclusively abode in the Father in such a way that he would not say or do anything of himself, but only that which was in the perfect will of the Father.

Jesus modeled for us through his baptism in life what it means to abide in Christ. When we look at how Jesus abode in the Father, we can begin to see just how radical it is to abide in him. In John 15, 10, we find Jesus making a very radical statement.

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. Did you get that? The standard for abiding in Christ is how he abode in the Father. Jesus did not water down what it means to be Christian so that he could get a greater following.

The faultless Savior is the standard of the true faith. He is what we are to emulate as adoring children that are dearly loved by him. The truth that the symbolism of water baptism reveals is what the Lord calls us to live in our day-to-day life as believers.

There are no exceptions to this. If we reject the faith that Jesus created and defined, then we are believing a false gospel, not the gospel of Jesus Christ. Going under the water speaks not only of the necessity that we die to our sin and sin nature, but that we also die to the right to govern our own lives.

This is what Jesus taught us through his water baptism. And it is this fallen desire to govern our own lives that has caused the race of man untold nightmares and sorrow. Our coming out of the water corresponds to the resurrection life that comes about when true salvation breaks into the life and the soul of a person.

It also reveals the necessity that we abide in Christ to walk in the power of that new life. I think that this would be a good time to define the word abide so that everybody knows what Jesus is talking about and what I am teaching on. Let me first give a dictionary definition.

To abide means to remain, continue, or to stay. Like Jesus said, Abide in me. It means to have one's abode, to dwell, to reside, like to abide as in a small village.

It means to continue in a particular condition or attitude. It can also imply that we endure, sustain, or withstand without yielding or submitting, such as to abide a vigorous onslaught. Another expression is to wait for or await, such as to abide the coming of the Lord.

Finally, it can mean to abide by, which is an act in accord with, submit to, agree to, to remain steadfast or faithful to. Now let's look at the scriptural definition that actually includes various aspects of the dictionary definition. In John 15.4, Jesus said, 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. Strong's Concordance gives the definition for abide as to stay, as in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy. It means to abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, and tarry.

So to abide in Christ, we have to remain or continue in our relationship with him. The 1984 New International Version translates the verse in this particular way. Remain in me, and I will remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

To abide also means to endure, which is integral to remaining in our given condition of walking with God. We must endure those attacks, trials, and temptations that could move us away from Jesus. To abide also speaks of our dwelling place, where we live or reside, which is a very beautiful idea.

If we make the Lord our home or habitation, then he has become to us a covering, like that of a house, which protects us from the elements of the world and from thieves and robbers. But there is more to this idea than that of a mere house as a building, but to a home as belonging to family. So to abide in Christ, we have to make him our home, the safe and secure place where we can endure the trials of life and the place where we want to remain, because we have found that belonging to God is the best place to live.

To this point in our study, we have determined that Jesus was baptized in water to be an example to us of what it means to abide in him as he abides in the Father. And we have just finished defining what abiding means. So now for the rest of this podcast, we will bring some practical application to this thought by continuing to use Jesus as our perfect example of what abiding looks like from God's point of view.

47 times in the Gospel of John, Jesus states in one way or another that whatever he said or did was exclusively done according to the will of the Father. Since Jesus died to his right to operate in his divine rights as God, he rose in the place of absolute dependence upon the Father. We cannot really comprehend this kind of absolute abiding, so it appears to us to be very, very radical.

Jesus is the creator God that with a word created all that is. Yet when he took upon himself humanity, everything he did was done through the Father's will. Let me try to illustrate just how radical an act it was for the Son to be totally dependent upon the Father.

I know that this illustration is very weak, but I think it will help us grasp a little more the idea of what Jesus did for us. Imagine that you are the firstborn son of a king, and you are destined to be king in your father's place when he dies. By the time you reach manhood, you have only tasted the luxury and pleasure that comes with the supreme status of being the crown prince of the realm.

You have been protected, coddled, praised, and pampered. Your social life revolves around the royalty of other nations and the nobility of your own. You have only known palace life and what it means to be served on a constant basis with your every want and desire filled with a mere word.

You do not know how to do anything outside of what is necessary for the training of a future king. You view the kingdom through the tainted lens of a sheltered life, so you are virtually oblivious to the conditions and needs of the peasant class of people that make up the majority of your kingdom. One day while you are out riding your horse, you are captured by some nefarious slave traders and sold into slavery.

All that you have known of palace life is only a memory, and your upbringing offers little help for the world you are now forced to enter. Your hands that have never known manual labor are now blistered and bleeding from the heavy work, and your muscles ache from the hard labor you are forced to perform. You are barely given enough food to live, and the hunger is so great that you would gladly beg in the streets for something more to eat.

Your beautiful clothes are soon reduced to rags because they were not designed for the demands of slave labor. This prince has fallen from his high position to that which is lower than he could have ever imagined. He did not do this voluntarily, but by force.

When Jesus took upon himself human flesh, he stooped lower than we could ever imagine, and he did it by his own volition. One thing that makes what Jesus did so radical is that he never ceased being God. He never ceased being all-powerful, all-knowing, or omnipresent, yet he willfully did not operate in those divine attributes so that he could be the Lamb of God.

At any time through his trial, beatings, flogging, and crucifixion, he could have with a single word destroyed the earth he created with a word, but he didn't. I do not understand the unfathomable distance Jesus stooped down to become human, nor can I comprehend how such a word can happen, but that is the miracle of Christ breaking into this world of rebels. From the point of his great self-emptying, which we will study next week, he became fully dependent upon the Father, which tells us that he only did and spoke that which the Father willed.

This would be a good time to give a scriptural account to illustrate what I am talking about. In John chapter 5, we find the story of an invalid that Jesus heals. The entire chapter is concerned with this account and all that happens as a result of Jesus healing the man.

Jesus is in Jerusalem and goes to what is called the sheep pool, otherwise known as the pool of Bethesda. The lame, blind, and diseased gathered around this pool, lying under its covered porches. They believe that an angel occasionally came to trouble the waters and whoever was first to enter the pool at that point would be healed.

Were there any historical accounts of people actually being healed, I do not know, but I do not have the problem with the supernatural and thoroughly believe that God is still working miracles today, so it is possible that this happened. We also do not know how many people were gathered around the pool when Jesus entered it. Imagine this for a moment.

Jesus enters an area where there are sick and diseased people all over the place. What an opportunity to make a greater name for himself by healing all of the people, and he possessed the power to do it. He could have healed all of them at once with a single word, or he could have touched each one to give that personal nature to his ministry.

Either way, he would have experienced the joy of seeing them running and jumping for joy over their healing. But that is not what Jesus did. And this is one reason why we rarely see such power given to people, because we would be prone to do what we thought was good rather than what the Father knew was good.

Jesus passed by all those hurting people to touch only one man that had been an invalid for 38 years. In the sixth verse, Jesus asked the man a simple question, Do you want to get well? The invalid answered in a roundabout way, What a hopeless situation! To see the pool, yet not be able to reach it even if he saw the angel trouble the waters. Jesus then commanded the man, There was no waiting for the miracle.

It happened immediately. So the man picked up his mat and walked. We are not told that the man was happy over his healing, but I think it's safe to say that he was.

He was so happy over it that he did not see Jesus walk away, nor did he know who healed him. It did not take long for the religious Jews to condemn the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath. I like how the former invalid answered the religious people.

He said, What the former invalid basically said was that, He has the authority to command me to pick up my mat on the Sabbath. A little later, Jesus revealed himself to the man, who in turn told the religious Jews that it was Jesus who healed him. The former invalid did not tell the religious crowd that Jesus healed him to get Jesus in trouble, but because he was excited over what the Lord had done for him and wanted to tell others.

What comes next in the narrative is the confrontation that happens between Jesus and the religious Jews as a result of this miracle. Jesus makes a very startling statement at this point. Because of the language and cultural barrier between us and the Jews of 2,000 years ago, we do not grasp how radical a statement Jesus here made.

Jesus made a clear declaration that he was equal with the Heavenly Father, which was an assertion of divinity. His persecutors were so enraged at this that they wanted to kill him. They knew what he was saying.

Not only was Jesus breaking the Sabbath and traditions of the elders, but as John 5.18 reads, he was even calling God his own father, making him equal with God. It is the next statement that Jesus makes that reveals the radical nature of abiding. Jesus did not do what he thought best, but what the Father knew was best.

So the Father told Jesus to heal just one man out of all the suffering people that gathered around that pool. As God incarnate, he could have healed all of them, but as Jesus the man, he was completely surrendered to the Father's will on every matter. We have a very hard time with the concept of absolute surrender, of totally abiding in Christ because it is all-consuming.

As finite creatures, we do not know the future, and because we do not completely surrender to God or have perfect faith, we do not trust God enough to unquestionably obey his every word. The Christian call is one to abide exclusively and fully in Jesus. Jesus did not leave any room or right for us to abide in him while abiding in the world.

It is one or the other, for it is impossible that it can be both. This is why I am so concerned with the large number of people that claim to be Christian, but do not live like Christ, for they are worldly in life and heart. We must make a choice to either truly abide in Christ or to abide in the world.

To not make a choice is to make a choice in the negative. There is too much at stake for indecision or apathy. The truth demands a response.

What will you do with Jesus? Will you abide in him, or will you rebel against him?

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