

What Does it Mean to Abide

by Michael Durham

This sermon emphasizes the importance of abiding in Christ and experiencing His presence through the Holy Spirit. It highlights the need for believers to actively engage in fellowship with God, not just through knowledge but through a conscious, daily interaction with Him. The speaker challenges listeners to examine if they are truly abiding in Christ and to repent if they have neglected this vital relationship.

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Description

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Transcript

Thank you, brother, for leading us this morning to the throne of God. It's just overwhelming to think that Jesus loves you. What he's done, what I am in myself, what he is, how can the two ever come together? But mercy and truth have kissed.

And now, you and I experience the affection of our God. We never know the back of his hand, but the sweet kisses of his lips. I've been his son now for over 30 years, and he's never, never, ever mistreated me.

I love my father, my earthly father. I don't know if he's in heaven or not. He was a hard man.

He could get angry at the drop of a hat. He didn't even have to drop the hat. I remember one time in a drunken stupor, a rage, he beat me.

But I have mistreated my heavenly father many times, and I deserved the beating. But I never got it, because Jesus took it for me. You wonder, why did they have to scourge him? Why did they have to do all the other things? Why didn't they just crucify him? We knew that was in the plan of God, but their depravity is seen at its worst.

They couldn't just kill him. They had to torture him in unbelievable, unspeakable ways. For he who knew no sin became sin for us.

And every lash of the whip was the holy, righteous God's lash upon our dear Savior, for you and me. It's that all that we know from Him now is His caress, His love, His tenderness, His affection. Praise be unto God.

Even when He disciplines us, it's love. I've never been disciplined by God, but I don't break down in tears, not because of the pain or the hardship, because I'm experiencing love. It's wonderful.

It is glorious. So thank you for reminding us of this, especially that last song that we sang today. The text I pray the Lord be pleased to once again speak to us from is the Gospel of John, chapter 15.

The Gospel of John, chapter 15. I'm going to read the text again. I pray that as we continue to read it in all four of these sessions, that it will become more and more ingrained in us.

I want to speak this morning as we continue the theme, Desperate Dependency, Living by Grace. I want to speak specifically today on what does it mean to abide in Christ. Definitions are extremely important.

Often we talk past each other because we're using the same words, but we define them so differently. What does it mean to abide in Christ? John, chapter 15, beginning with verse 1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away.

And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes that it may bear more fruit. And as we said last night, I think a more accurate translation of verse 2 is every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He lifts up. In fact, in my New King James translation, actually in the margin, they included that.

They said, lifts up. Verse 3, 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, and 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's cast out as a branch, it is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. But 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. As the Father loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. None of Jesus' I Am statements so speak to His incarnation, His subordination, His humiliation as does this word, I am the true vine.

And the only way we're truly going to experience our desperate dependency on Christ is for we to see more and more of His beauty. Brother, you've got to see Him. For me, that's what this weekend is about.

You seeing Christ afresh. I was reading this morning early, and I saw an identification, something I could feel a relevance to. The blind man that Jesus touched, but all he could see was men as walking trees.

Jesus touched him again, and he could see clearly. I've been touched. I was blind.

I can see. But oh, I need a second touch. I need more.

I need to see Him more clearly. And so what I want to do in this text this morning, I want to show you Jesus. I want to show you the unbelievable character of this Son of God.

I want you to see His heart, and if you can see His heart, you will not be the same. This text is the life and essence of Christianity. We have a redacted Christianity.

Reductionism rules the hour in which you and I live, and superficiality is modern man's expertise. We have literally taken the Gospel, and we have reduced the Christian to a bare minimum. The end of the Christian life is its beginning.

In other words, we see the sum total of the Christian life in the act of conversion. Faith and repentance seems to be the goal, but it is not the goal. We seem to think the new birth is all there is to the Christian life, and after that, the greatest expectation on the calendar of the Christian is when He dies or Christ returns.

But that is not the sum total of the Christian life. That is the beginning. The new birth is only the beginning of a new life as physical birth is the beginning of our physical existence.

The essence of Christianity is Jesus, and you interacting with Him, seeing Him, experiencing Him. Now those are words that we're all so familiar with, and because we are familiar with them, they have lost their impact and power. I want to slow you down this weekend, and I want to confront you with this reality that if you have been born again, you've been born again in order to relate to God, to relate to Him.

How can I prove this to you? Well, all I've got to do is take you back to the garden. What was the penalty of Adam and Eve's sin? What was it? Death, separation. They're the same word.

They mean the same thing. It was death. But what was death and how it was defined? Because Adam went on to live 930 years, physically, that is.

The day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. How did he die then that day? By his separation from God. That was the penalty of his sin.

Hell is not the worst penalty. It's to be separated from God. And so, Paul tells us in the 11th verse of the 8th chapter of Romans, as he lists all of those great benefits of justification, he comes finally to the ultimate.

It's almost like you're listening to an info commercial. He says, and this, we have peace with God. But there's more, and then this, and then this.

But ultimately, he finishes in that 11th verse, and not only this, but we rejoice in God through the reconciliation of Jesus Christ. There it is, the ultimate, the final salvation, to be restored to God himself. So that now, as Adam before the fall had communion with God, now we can have communion with him.

That's why you are saved. That's the essence, and this is why this parable is our focal attention this week, or this weekend. I want to remind you and return you to the essence of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

And so, before I tackle verse 1, I want to remind you of another fact. Otherwise, you will lose the significance of what Jesus is saying here when he says, He's the vine, you will not see Christ for all that he is and all that he's done for you. Earlier in this discourse, of which the parable is only a part of, an

illustration, he says in chapter 14, verse 7, John 14, 7, If you had known me, you would have known my father also, and from now on you know him and have seen him.

This is a repeated theme through the Gospel of John. The entire Gospel of John teaches us that Jesus is God. In fact, it teaches it more than even the other Gospels.

He's deity. He didn't earn his deity. He is the eternal Son of God.

He was and is and shall be always. The incarnation did not change that. He still remains in his place in the Godhead.

And he says that in the 16th chapter, verse 28, John 16, 28. He refers to this. I came forth from the Father.

I didn't start. My beginning isn't in Bethlehem. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world.

Again, I leave the world and go to the Father. He preexisted before the virgin conceived. He is the creator of all things.

John begins his Gospel, does he not, in the third verse of that prologue, the first chapter, And all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made. He is the divine creator. But our parable does not portray Jesus as creator or even deity.

The metaphor constrains him to be something created. Now listen carefully. Not only is he the creator, but he's also the created.

A vine is propagated by a seed. There's a time when a vine doesn't exist. Another vine produced a grape that had a seed in it.

The master vine grower takes the seed and plants it in a pot of soil. The seed germinates and up through the soil surface, it breaks through as a small and tender sprout. And the grower nurtures that tiny shoot until one day it's ready to plant in the vineyard.

This is what Christ is stating here when he says, I am the true vine. A grape vine just doesn't appear. It just doesn't happen by circumstance or accident to appear in the vineyard, no.

Someone plants it in the vineyard. Jesus is using an analogy here to show us that God has been planted among us as one would plant a vine. This is the analogy you see in the Old Testament.

We referred to it last night in Isaiah 5. God planted Israel as a vine in the promised land. God has planted Jesus in this world as a vine grower would plant a grape vine. That's the illustration here.

He didn't just send Him by some teleporting device. He planted Him in the womb of the Virgin. Now, how He does that we do not know.

All we know is this, the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary. And without a human man to impregnate her, she conceived, a virgin conceived. Now this is terribly difficult to understand.

The Creator becomes the created. How do any of us dare to think we could understand that? How does infinity take on finiteness and still retain infinity? It's beyond us. We cannot know this.

Jesus did not stop being the Creator. He didn't stop being divine. But in addition to being divine, He became a human being.

That fact alone ought to get us all on our faces this morning. I wonder why it is we've become so accustomed to such glorious, incomprehensible thoughts. And we can take it and have no effect, no registration within or without.

How? What a shockwave must have rattled heaven when the announcement went forth to the angelic company that the Creator and their Lord was going to become a man planted as a tender shoot in the virgin's womb. Whether God gathered all the heavenly hosts to the throne room of heaven and told them all at once, or whether He told an archangel and gave him the responsibility to tell, the rest we do not know. But can you imagine the puzzlement when such news was heard among them? Their questions must have been first, why? And secondly, how could God become a man? Spurgeon, in his remarkable way, painted with words the possibility of how that sacred scene unfolded.

May I read it to you? It's good. It's worth the time. Do you see Him as on that day of heaven's eclipse? Wow, isn't that beautiful? Heaven's eclipse.

He did, as it were, ungird Himself of His majesty. Can you conceive the increasing wonder of the heavenly host when the great deed was actually done? When they saw His priceless tiara taken off? When they watched Him unbind His girdle of stars and cast away His sandals of gold? Can you conceive what must have been the astonishment of the angels when He said to them, I do not disdain the womb of the Virgin. I'm going down to earth to become a man.

Can you picture them as they declared that they would follow Him? They followed Him as near as He would permit them. And when they came to earth, they began to sing glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill to men. Well, I cannot say it happened just as the way Spurgeon imagined, but I can say with much certainty that He who upheld the universe with His omnipotent strength had to be held up in the arms of the Virgin.

The very God who fed the birds of the air now must be nursed at Mary's breast. Almighty God who sat on heaven's throne was reduced to a feeding trough for His bed. How amazing is this? Why? Because He loved you.

But this meant subordination. It meant humiliation. You see, there's a reason why I'm doing this.

Remember the whole parable is an illustration of He and His Father's relationship, which would be a pattern of our relationship with Jesus. Not only is the incarnation visible here, I think, in this metaphor, but His subordination and humiliation. In John 14, 28, we read it last night.

You've heard me say to you, I'm going away and coming back to you. If you loved me, you would rejoice because I said I'm going to the Father, for my Father is greater than I. Now here we have to stop just for a few seconds. If Jesus is deity, God, how can He say that the Father is greater? Because what little we do know about the triuneness of God is that all three persons of the Godhead are equal in essence and substance.

There's a voluntary submission with each other. This is not voluntary submission, this is voluntary subordination. And in His humanity, He subordinates, which tells me, and it ought to encourage you, you do have someone who can sympathize with you, who knows exactly what it means to be flesh and blood,

tempted in every point as we are, yet without sin.

He knows temptation better than you do, friend. I don't care how deep sin drug you through the dregs of hell. You don't know temptation at its maximum like Jesus.

Can you imagine what horrors it must have been for that holy mind to have had the suggestion of Satan come to it there in the wilderness? Only a pure mind could, and an unadulterated mind could understand. We have no clue. Yes, He knows what it's like to be tempted to turn away from the Father's will, watch Him there as He agonizes in the garden of Gethsemane, and the Father's will is now to embrace the very thing His very nature hates.

Wish I had time to unpack that for you. But the point is, He is a man also. As I said last night, fully God, as if not man, fully man, as if not God.

He has every experience that we have had as humanity except sin, transgressing the Father's will. And thank God, oh thank God, somehow this man, not God, man, Jesus of Nazareth, tempted and tested and tried, yet He succeeded, victorious over what I could not do. Thank God He passed the test.

He was our only hope, our last hope, and He did it. The first Adam didn't, and he was perfect as also. He had nothing within to be enticed, and somehow, beyond my understanding, a righteous, perfect being transgressed the commandment of God.

And here comes the last Adam. Every much as in the place of the first Adam, in the experience of the first Adam. And He doesn't rely on His deity.

The nature of divinity is not His support here. I don't know how to explain that to you. All I know is the sacred record says it, and I believe it, and I identify with it.

He knows! He knows. He knows my struggle, and He can identify with it because He subordinated Himself. And therefore Paul says, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus.

Don't rush over those words. Pay attention to them. Let this mind, this mindset, this devotion, this passion be in you, that was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men, and being found in the fashion of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, the death of the cross.

There it is, subordination to the Father's will. That's why He said last night, as we quoted Him in John 5.30, I can of Myself do nothing. I am a man, and I am relying upon the power of the Father's Spirit in me.

And now Jesus is telling His apostles He's going to go away, and they must now do the same thing He has done, rely upon His Spirit in them. You and I cannot imagine this kind of humiliation, but He did it. And therefore He is our example.

This is a true statement worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ desperately depended upon the Father. He desperately depended upon the Father, and He abided in the Father. He said in John 15.10, we read it just a few moments ago as we read our text, 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.

His abode was in the Father, and now He's asking us to make our abode with Him as He had with the Father. He's our example. Beloved, this is the crux of the matter.

This is the issue. This is it. This is where every one of us are living.

And if God gives you the grace to rise again tomorrow, you'll be in the same place. So will I. Will I live according to the mindset of Jesus Christ, and voluntarily subordinate myself to Him? This is the spirit and essence of Christianity. And we hear it in our Lord's words as the cup is being pressed to His lips.

Father, if there be any other way, nevertheless, not my will, Thy will be done. That's the challenge today, tomorrow, and every day as you walk this earth. Will you submit your will to the will of the Father? That's what this parable is illustrating.

How are you doing in your voluntary subordination to Christ? Have you taken the cup? Have you received it? Have you wrestled with it and said, but oh Lord, I know You love me, and I know You have my best interest at heart, nevertheless, not my will, Thy will be done. Don't ever believe that you will have a crisis experience and it's all done once and for all. I know maybe men that we admire have given us some kind of idea that that's what happened to them, but friends, they still had to battle it.

As long as corruptible flesh remains with you, you still have to battle it. It may be easier to overcome in the days as you grow in maturity, but you still have to battle it. It's still not my will, but Thy will be done.

Now, before we look at the Bible's other ways of saying how we ought to abide in Christ, I think we need to define the word and look at it itself. The word abide can be translated remain or dwell or continue or stay. These are common words, synonyms for this word abide, but what does it mean to dwell or remain or continue in Jesus? What does that mean? At first thinking, it would seem to suggest inactivity.

If somebody says remain right here, don't you move, remain right here, what would you think? That you would stay right there, stay put and change nothing. And that speaks of inactivity. But inactivity is not what our Lord wants you to think.

He wants you to think of living together, hanging out with Him, remaining in close fellowship with Him. That's the meaning of this word abide. It's not the picture of doing nothing.

It's not the idea of inactivity, but rather activity. So, for example, you could really translate what Jesus is saying as this, remain with me and do not depart. And if Jesus is saying that to us, what does that mean? It means exactly this.

If I say to you, come, remain with me, stay with me, that means wherever I go, you go. Whatever I'm doing, you're doing. That's what this idea of this word abide contains.

Not inactivity, but rather activity. In order for a branch to bear fruit, it has to be in harmony with the fruit-bearing life of the vine. It has to be participating in the vine's business of producing fruit.

One of the best definitions in my years of trying to get deeper to understand this text, I came across A.W. Pink's definition. Now, I won't suggest everything A.W. Pink said, but on this one, I can wholeheartedly endorse it. Let me read it to you, then we'll go back and unpack it.

He said, To abide in Christ has always reference to the maintenance of fellowship with God in Christ. The word abide calls us to vigilance, lest at any time the experimental realization of our union with Christ

should be interrupted. To abide in Him, then, is to have sustained, conscious communion with Him.

To abide in Christ signifies the constant occupation of the heart with Him, a daily active faith in Him, which, so to speak, maintains the dependency of the branch upon the vine, and the circulation of life and fatness of the vine in the branch. Let's go back and kind of dissect this and look at it closer. To abide in Christ, Pink says, has always a reference to maintenance of fellowship of God.

Notice the word maintenance. Remember I said last night that in my travels I'd come to see that my thesis was correct, sadly, that even pastors don't know how to maintain a walk with God. We get there and then as soon as we get there we seem to lose it or fall out.

How do you maintain fellowship with Christ? So the key word here is maintenance. Abiding is learning how to maintain fellowship with God. And he said it requires for you to be vigilant, to roll up your sleeves, grit your teeth, and say we're going to work.

Something for me to do here. Here's what I'm to do. Like a centric standing guard over my heart, I am to protect my heart from any time experimental realization of our union with Christ should be interrupted.

Now what does that mean? When you use the word experimental, I remember preaching a conference many, many years ago and I used that term experimental. And a lot of people started complaining after the sermon. What's this man talking about experimenting? We don't experiment with Jesus.

He's not a case we can put in a test tube and run tests on. Well of course my fault was I assumed they'd read some of the same things I'd read. It's an old archaic word used simply meaning to experience.

Experiential is the word perhaps better used today. And so he's saying here, you have a responsibility as a guard, a sentry over your heart to be vigilant against anything that would disrupt this experiencing of realizing you are in union with Christ. Not just knowing you're in union.

Not just believing the fact that you are in union, but experiencing the reality. The reality of that union. Which means Jesus, if he's right, and I believe he is right, in fact I know he's right.

It's the whole testimony of not pink, but the scripture. That we are saved to walk with God. Enoch walked with God.

Noah walked with God. Abraham was known as a friend of God. Moses talked with God face to face.

And as we continue throughout Scriptures, we are constantly reminded over and over and over that God is not just an idea. God is not just a concept. He's not a theological fact.

When the neo-Calvinistic movement started back in the late 80's and early 90's, I remember saying to my congregation, I'm thankful for the resurrection and revival of these truths, but I fear, I fear it is going to be nothing but an intellectual theological fad. Sadly, I believe my words have been proven true. The reformed movement to neo-Calvinism is really not as healthy as she would portray herself to be.

Why? Because we've reduced God to theological tenets. We know a lot about God. Our doctrine is accurate, biblical, balanced.

And yet we do not walk with the God we profess to know. We think that that's the sum essence of what Christianity is. We've redefined spiritual maturity as growth in knowledge of the Bible.

But it isn't, my friends. Certainly, knowledge of the Bible should lead to spiritual maturity. That's a correct premise.

But my friends, often it doesn't. How many of you, you know your doctrine, your I's are dotted, your T's are crossed. You can argue, you can debate.

You can prove your position. I'm not asking you how well you can prove your position. I'm not asking you how well you can give an answer for the hope that lies within you.

I'm asking you how real is walking communion with God? That's what I'm asking. That's what Jesus is pressing here upon His eleven apostles and we, His disciples. And what He's saying is, this is more than possible.

When I do a series of teaching on how to maintain fellowship with God, I always go to 1 John. And I open up 1 John in the very opening statements of 1 John. Why is John writing that epistle? He says that you might have fellowship with us.

What does that mean? Fellowship with John? Peter? Paul? No! Fellowship with them as they fellowship with God. That's what He means. That you can literally have the same fellowship that I, John, have with God.

But our problem is, we don't believe that. We believe that was relegated to a special elite force in God's army. We believe that's only for a select few and unfortunately we're not a part of that group.

No, my friend, that is unbiblical. That's totally contrary to this parable. Totally contrary to what our Lord is teaching us here in these chapters of John.

You should be realizing, experiencing union with Christ in an uninterrupted fashion. And so He goes on to say that the goal really is, this is what He's trying to communicate, is to have sustained, conscious communion. It grieves me, and I have to be careful because I can get in the flesh too easily here.

It grieves me that so many of us whose doctrine is correct and accurate, that we've run past the goal post and we have exceeded the Scriptures by making the Bible the third person of the Trinity. And the Holy Spirit is no longer to be experienced. He's somebody who comes and dwells in us at the moment we're saved, but we have no interaction with Him.

Boy, the devil is sly. That sounds good because we see all the crazy ones swinging from the chandeliers, prophesying, calling themselves new apostles, predicting this and that. Did you see them? A few of them make a video where they got on the platform and they cursed COVID-19.

Back in April. Well, I guess COVID-19 didn't hear the curse. And we so dislike that, and rightly so, we have such a distaste.

We know it's not genuine. We know it's not of God, and we want to run from that, but don't run too far. Remember, every heresy rides the back of a half-truth.

There is genuine experience with God. He's real. I've seen too much.

I have experienced too much for you to come down and tell me that my experiences were not real. If the Bible substantiates them, if the Bible tells me I ought to be experiencing them, then brother, they're real.

Don't let a devil from hell deceive you otherwise.

You ought to have active, daily, conscious awareness of Him. And that's how you maintain. That's what it means to abide.

As you can see, abiding is a word that speaks of interaction. An interaction that passes the fruit-producing life of Christ from Him to you. Now, in tonight's message, I'm going to go more into how abiding occurs, and it'll spill over into the last message on Saturday morning.

How do I abide in Christ? But abiding is not something that's automatic. That's what you must see here. It's not automatic.

It's a command. But it's not a work to do something in order to have fellowship with God. Did you hear me? You've got to get this.

This is where so many of our dear brothers and sisters have been detoured and distracted. They hear this word abide, and they know it's a command, so they start to initiate the work and the labor of trying to abide. No.

It's not something in order to have fellowship with Christ. Abiding is fellowship with Christ. It is fellowship.

Abiding is the act and experience of fellowshiping with Jesus. How many of you are married here? You love fellowshiping with your wives. Now, she's not here to tell the truth, but God is, so be careful.

Do you enjoy fellowshiping with her? Amen. You love your wives as Christ loved the church. You enjoy fellowshiping with her in every aspect, and the longer you know her and the more you get to know her, the greater the fellowship.

I've been married, it will be 40 years in May, and it is better. I love her more today than I did the day I married her, because I know her better. And it is true, knowing my wife is loving her.

How is it that we say we love him? Come on, folks. And we don't enjoy fellowship with him. One of our problems is the passion of God's people.

I'm not talking about false converts. I'm talking about people who are really saved. We have a passion problem.

We are not as the deer that pants after the water brooks, no matter how many times we sing that chorus. We are not actively pursuing fellowship with Christ. We do not wake up with the longing, I've got to get along with him and find him.

And there is the issue. That's what abiding is. Abiding is the act of fellowshiping.

It's the act of experiencing that communion in such a way I'm conscious of it. I know it. I'm not having to be convinced.

I'm not going through some mental gymnastics to convince myself that that's what I'm doing. No, it's real. And that's what He saved you for.

And if that's not your daily occurrence and experience, my friends, you're living far beneath what Jesus died to give you. Are you daily, hourly, minute by minute in a conscious realization of His abiding

presence? Are you doing all that you do in light of this promise? I will never leave thee, nor forsake you. Even Jesus in John chapter 14, in this discourse, verse 21, He reminds us of His manifestation.

He states it in another way. He says in verse 21, the same thing as our parable, He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is He who loves me, and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will manifest myself to him. There's God's promise.

Where's the reality of the fulfillment of that promise in your life? I'm not trying to make you feel bad. That's not the issue. I'm trying to whet your appetite.

When they told me we're going to have brisket today, I love brisket. I like to cook brisket. So I'm looking forward to our brother, Zell.

There he is. I'm looking forward to that. Just the thought has stirred up the appetite, physical appetite.

I should not have reminded you, that's the worst thing a preacher can do, start talking about food right at the noon hour. I think after all these years, I would have learned better. I'm trying to whet your appetite for the meat that endureth.

For the bread of heaven. Brothers, we can here in this pavilion, in this place, have a table spread before us of delectable delicacies from heaven above. We can be at our Father's table right now eating and drinking and fellowshiping with Him, the Creator of all things.

Why are we like dogs trying to lick up crumbs from the Master's table? That dear woman, boy, she had it, didn't she? Jesus said, you're a little dog. It's not proper to give the meat to the little dogs. What'd she do? My friend who's now in heaven, Conrad Murrell, says she started barking.

Yes, Lord. But even the little dogs get the crumbs. And here we are, God's children, and we're underneath the table lacking up crumbs when we could be sitting at the table dining with the Father and the Son.

Why? Why have you settled for less? It's an issue of passion. It's an issue of unbelief in the end. I'm sorry, no matter how many times you'll hear me preach, it'll probably always come back to this.

I've become a one-note preacher. It always stems to unbelief. Trace the fruit to the root and it's always unbelief.

Every sin. And the sin of a passionless love for Christ is rooted in unbelief. You don't believe He's as good as He says He is.

Intellectually, you know, that's not true. But I don't care what your mind's telling you. I want to know what your heart is pursuing.

That tells me what you really believe. There's an interaction that's to take place in our walk with Him. And it's not all... Please listen.

You think I must... I know what people think when I talk like this. They think, I would like to be in Michael Durham's prayer closet. I can just imagine what happens.

Visions and voices and glory. If I had that, I would be scared to death that something was wrong. It's not always sensational, nor is it always marked with dramatic experience.

In fact, most often it isn't. But it's nonetheless real. And I don't know how to communicate that.

I'm still struggling, still striving to find the right vocabulary to help people to understand that faith provides a far deeper experience than anything of phenomenon. I'm not talking about a mystical relationship. But I am talking about a relationship where you and God interact.

But you see, we've defined mystic now, and that's what the word actually means. But it's become a curse word in our circle, so we have to find another word. So here's my word, biblical spirituality.

Biblical spirituality is you and Jesus communing together in a conscious way. A way that you're aware of. And I hope tonight and tomorrow to help you renew the mind so that you can do that.

And a few minutes left this morning. Let me get to the very heart of the matter. One of the most dominant themes of this discourse, as we said last night, was Jesus' ministry.

Jesus in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He had assured the apostles that though he wouldn't be with them bodily, he would be with them in the person of the Holy Spirit. It would be the Holy Spirit who would be the one that would lead them.

Again, can I read these texts to you? You know, some people get bored when a preacher starts reading scripture. I've never quite understood that. I hope that... I don't think I'm in that company today, and I'm very thankful for that.

John 14, 16, and 17. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another helper, advocate, parakletos, of course, is the Greek word, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. And then, look at verse 26, same chapter, John 14.

But the helper of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He... Now watch this, guys. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. That sounds very familiar.

Well, let me hasten you to John 15. John 15, verses 26 and 27. But when the helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who, by the way, is truth.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. So the Spirit of truth is the Spirit of? There you go. Well, you guys are sharp.

Who proceeds from the Father. So Jesus could have the Spirit because the Spirit proceeds from the Father and it's the Spirit of the Father as well as the Spirit of Christ. He will testify of me and you also will bear witness because you've been with me from the beginning.

And then in the 16th chapter, this gets better. John 16, verses 13 and 14. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority.

But whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. Wow! That really sounds familiar.

It's exactly what Jesus said happened to Him. The Spirit heard the Father and the Spirit relayed that to the Son. Remember what He said? I don't speak except what I hear the Father speak.

How did He hear the Father speak? The Spirit from the Father heard the Father and relays that to Christ. Now Jesus is saying, the same Spirit that the Father gave Me is going to be in you, and He's going to hear Me speak, and He's going to tell you what I speak. So that you and I can say exactly what Jesus said.

The words that I speak, I do not speak them of Myself. It's what I hear my Jesus say. And unless you're afraid that I'm speaking about extra revelatory statements, let me reassure you, that's not what I'm dealing with.

All I need to know from Jesus to get home safely is in this book. If it's not in the book, and I need it, then God terribly served us in injustice. But He didn't, did He? He's given you everything you need to get home safely, and it's in this book.

It's the words of our Lord. Genesis to Malachi is a picture of Christ in storybook fashion. And from Matthew to Revelation, it's Jesus expounded in the Gospels.

We can walk with Him as He walks the shores of Galilee, and as He teaches on the mountain, and as He walks down the streets of Jerusalem teaching His doctrine. We can watch Him. We can walk with Him through the Gospels.

Friends, I do not let one single day pass without I read in the Gospels so I can observe my Jesus. Every day. I don't know what your reading routine is, but I would suggest that don't let a day pass until you watch Jesus and sit back and just meditate and watch why He does what He does, how He does what He does.

Learn Him like you would learn your spouse by observation. Watch Him in these Gospels. Sometimes I will read my Gospels as if Jesus is telling me His own story.

Where it says Jesus said, I'll just insert, and I said, what? Because my mind needs help. I've got to renew the mind. I've got to remember this is Him talking to me.

It's not a textbook. It's not a systematic theology either. I don't know if I got it on the record, but let me make sure it does.

It's not a systematic theology book either. The Bible is not a systematic theology book. We'll talk more about that in the upcoming services.

Jesus did what He commands us. He abided in the Father, and now we are to abide in Him. Which means this, guys.

Listen carefully. As Jesus was to the apostles, now the Holy Spirit is to us. Do you understand? They walked with Him.

They ate with Him. John says we saw Him, heard Him, handled Him. We can't do that.

Because He's where? The man? Christ Jesus. Because He's in a body. He still has a body.

I'm surprised. This experience these last three years has been really revelatory, eye-opening to me. I can't believe how many conservative, Bible-believing, Reformed people that still are hung up, does Jesus have a body? Still yet.

I was asked by a pastor that question not too long ago. Do you think Jesus still has a body? And he graduated from one of our prestigious schools. Read the book of Hebrews.

That'll give you your answer. Yes, He's got His body. We cannot handle Him and touch Him with the physical.

We are now weaning ourselves from the physical so that we can walk by faith in the spiritual realm. And as they walked with a bodily Jesus, a man who was God in flesh, we can now walk in the same way with the Holy Spirit in the spiritual realm as we pilgrimage through this physical realm. The Holy Spirit is to us as Jesus was to the disciples.

But for this morning, you've heard enough to know, I think, whether or not you are abiding in Christ. I think I've communicated enough that you should be able to leave here not knowing if you are or are not abiding. You should know.

And if you're not abiding in Christ, if you're not drinking in what the Spirit gives, if you're not actively and consciously in fellowship with the Spirit of Christ, then my friends, you have reason to humble yourself right now and confess your disregard of this command. The brisket will wait. If you saw in God's mercy and love that you are not daily, daily, moment by moment, walking consciously in fellowship and therefore you are disregarding this command, then let us confess it to God.

Let us turn from this. Let us become vigilant centuries over our heart and do what we must do to voluntarily subordinate ourselves desperately depending upon Him once again. You've done it before if you're a Christian.

You did it. You wouldn't be a Christian if you didn't. Desperately depend upon Him and voluntarily subordinate yourself.

Let us corporately as well as individually cry out in much repentance that we have forsaken the living waters to live out of the broken cisterns of our own strength. We've tried to be both vine and branch. And there is our great sin.

To try to be both vine. Oh, may God deliver us from whatever theology that we're believing and lead us to the biblical theology that there's only one vine and we are the branches and that apart from Him we can do nothing. Amen.

Amen. Let's pray. Just obey God, guys.

Just do what God's leading you to do. Father, we thank you for this word from our Lord. And we are also grateful that the Holy Spirit attends His Word.

Granting understanding, illumination. We thank you for that work of you, our Lord Holy Spirit. What you're doing in us these days, even in this moment.

Help us to be good repenters. Help us to get desperate so that we can depend upon you totally. And be consciously aware of your fellowship.

Hallelujah. What a privilege. You're just so good.

You know how to bless us above and beyond what our cups can hold. Here's our cup, Lord. Fill it up.

And make us whole, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/in52FJ_woFc.mp4

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