

“Abiding in Jesus”

Greetings to in Christ you this morning.

We have talked about New Birth for several weeks because spiritually “dead people” cannot be discipled into Jesus – perhaps discipled into the Church – but not discipled into Jesus. Only “spiritually alive” children of God can be discipled into Jesus and into life in the Spirit.

For many Christians, their thought process may go like this. “I have been born again and I am a new creation in Christ Jesus, so what do I do now? I guess I’ll do the best I can, try not to use bad language or steal anything, go to church as often as it’s convenient, and when I die I’ll go to heaven.” (Some people actually conduct their “Christian life” just like that!) Is Jesus okay with us just living a “normal, simple life”... not really getting involved in any ministry, and just waiting for Him to return? I don’t think so!

I think most Believers would agree that they need to join a Christ-centered church and regularly attend the meetings with other believers. I further think most would agree that they should read their Bible, pray, and try to live a good life. These are all certainly good things to do.

But are these activities enough? The short answer is, “No”.

- Consider Jesus’ verdict on people moving in Pentecostal power who were missing something important:

Matthew 7:21- *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’*

Do you find this passage as disturbing as I do?

- Consider Jesus’ evaluation of those who intensely studied (and even memorized large portions of) the Bible but something essential was missing in their lives:

John 5:37- *You have never heard [the Father’s] voice....³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

- And consider Jesus confronting the religious leaders of Israel terribly lacking something:

Matthew 23:2- *“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.”³ So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.*

After saying this, Jesus goes on in Matthew 23 to say **7 times** to the leaders: “**Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!**” (“**WOE**” means ‘God’s judgment is on you’!)

Jesus makes it clear that something more than power ministry, Bible knowledge, and religious authority are necessary to enter the kingdom of God. What else is needed?

This is what is needed: **You must know God – you must have relationship with him – you must be filled with his Spirit – and you must hear his voice and follow him.** That’s it! That is all you need.

Perhaps you have come into Christianity without hearing this message, or without knowing that this is God's highest priority for you. You may have come into Christianity without telling those under your spiritual influence that Jesus died to make this possible for them as well.

Relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit is the first priority for God's People. You must know God and live in continual relationship with him. Jesus died on the cross to make this possible.

Pause here to read John 15:1-17.

In this passage Jesus gives his Disciples final instructions at the Last Supper before going to the cross: Starting out we read in **John 15:1**- *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*

People in Jesus' day were familiar with vineyards and wine-making. So Jesus uses a vineyard metaphor to illustrate successful relationship with God.

Jesus pictures himself as the trunk of the plant which rises from the ground to divide into individual vines which run along the supporting trellis. The translation in **verse 2** of *"cuts off every branch"* is a poor one. The underlying Greek word is *"airo"* which means to lift and move something (not to 'cut off').

Picture a vine which has fallen to the ground and gotten covered with dust or mud. It can't produce grapes. The gardener - i.e. the Father tending to his People - would never cut off such a vine!

Instead, he carefully washes it and reattaches it to the trellis so it can start producing fruit. Jesus goes on to say to his disciples, **John 15:3**- *"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." ⁴ Abide in me, as I also abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must abide in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me.*

Life flows from the trunk into the vine and enables the vine to produce fruit.

What this is saying to us is, "If you are born again, you are IN CHRIST JESUS and he is IN YOU. So live that way! Always!"

Apart from Jesus you cannot produce spiritual fruit: neither the fruit of new believers being discipled into Jesus, nor the fruit of the Spirit (listed in **Galatians 5:22-23**).

You can and you will produce eternal fruit if you are born again, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and if you live in continual obedient relationship with the Father.

When you falter or fail, the Father will lift you- clean you- reset you- in order to produce more fruit through you.

Apart from continual relationship with Jesus, you can produce a lot of human "stuff" *but you cannot* produce true spiritual fruit which comes from the living God.

- Are you attached to "Vine Jesus"?
- Are you continually drawing your life from him?
- Are you producing true spiritual fruit as a consequence?

NEXT WEEK: More about abiding in Jesus.

Blessings to you in Christ-

Douglas

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