

The Fruit of Truly Abiding in Christ | 1 John 2:28-3:10

Intro: Abide in Christ

“Jesus is indeed to me the True Vine, bearing me, nourishing me, supplying me, using me & filling me to the full to make me bring forth fruit abundantly... I am indeed a branch of Jesus, the True Vine, abiding in him, resting on him, waiting for him, serving him & living only that through me, too, he may show forth the riches of his grace, & give his fruit to a perishing world... The thought of what the Vine is to the branch, & Jesus to the believer, will give new force to the words, “Abide in me.” – Andrew Murray, Abide in Christ

Our verses today open with the words **“And now, little children, abide in him...”** John is only echoing to others what he had learned from Jesus. The basic meaning of the word abide is to remain, stay or continue. John is using the word in this letter to urge believers to remain, stay or continue in Christ. He teaches believers how they can & why they need to do so. It is so fitting that this challenging section opens with the words **“abide in him”**. It does not open with the words “try harder” or “live better” but with the word **“abide in him.”** This is so important to see, for as challenging as the following verses are it is clear in each paragraph that John want us to see that Christ is the great worker & not us... In John’s Gospel Jesus says; **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”** This sums up John’s teaching in these verses & it sums up the reality of the Christian life!

The word abide comes up three times in these verses (2:28; 3:6; 9) & as I’ve noted before it appears 23 times in the letter. It is also an idea that connects the previous verses with the ones we’re now looking at. In the previous verses we learned that we abide in Christ by allowing the teaching of his apostles to abide in us & because the anointing (Holy Spirit) we have received abides in us. John now builds on this by showing what such abiding produces in the lives of God’s children.

I have three points which I believe help apply God’s Word to us today. *1. Hope Makes Us Holy. 2. Christ Changes Our Habits. 3. New Birth Makes Us Righteous.* In essence this is the same point made from three different angles. I could equally say my three points are; 1. Abide in Him. 2. Abide in Him. 3. Abide in Him. For these verses are really about is the fruit of truly & freely abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ includes knowing who we are by grace – we are children of God, lavishly loved by our Father! Abiding in Christ means carrying hope within our hearts as well as visible change in our lives. Christ’s promises bring hope! Christian hope produces purity! New birth produces righteousness! Christ’s work on the cross breaks old habits of sin & produces new habits of righteousness. He appeared in order to take away sins... to destroy the works of the devil! The good news is that all this is produced by the hope of Christ’s second appearing, by the work of his first appearing & by his abiding seed within. This is what these verses are all about. The only thing we are directly told to do in these verses is **“little children, abide in him, so that...”** Everything

else happens as a result of abiding in him... John here returns to the moral test in these verses & he wants us to see it is abiding in Christ that empowers us to pass the moral test; it is no work of the flesh!

1. *Hope Makes Us Holy (2:28-3:3)*

The Christian's confidence comes from abiding in Christ for there is no reason for confidence outside of him. Therefore abiding in him is what prepares us for his coming. The reason we can have confidence at his second appearing is because we have confidence in what he accomplished for us at his first. So John writes; **"And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink back at his coming."** John wants his readers to have confidence at Christ's coming & abiding in him is the key to such confidence.

Not only does John want believers to have confidence at his coming, he also wants believers to be confident in God's love for them today. Therefore he writes in 3:1; **"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."** What love has he given? His best! He gave his one & only begotten Son so that we should be called his children... We don't have to wait until we are like Christ before we are adopted. We are his children today & for this reason we will one day be like Christ. We don't become like Christ to become children of God we will become like Christ because we are children of God already. This is first & foremost about our true identity. This is so foundational for how we receive the following verses.

Abiding in such glorious truth is what gives us confidence for that future day when he appears. So John continues 3:2; **"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall see him as he is."** There is already but not yet tension here. We are God's children right now yet we will not realise the full glory of what we already are until Christ appears... In the previous verses John told them **"you all have knowledge... you have no need that anyone should teach you"** in the context of them knowing all they need to know for Christian living now. However here John balances things by admitting he doesn't know the full glory of the appearing of Christ – he uses the word **"we"**.... Yet we do know we shall be like him & John says; **"And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure!"** Don Carson says; *"If you seek holiness you will not find it; but if you seek Christ you will find holiness."* John tells us something similar here. It is knowing who we are now, children of God, & the future hope this brings that produces holiness in our lives (cf. 2 Pet 3:13-14). It is hope that makes us holy, it is abiding in the hope found in Christ. Hope is purities fuel, not guilt or self help. You desire to see more holiness in your life? Then fill your heart & mind with the diesel of hope! It is knowing we our destined for a new world that empowers us to live new lives!

Gospel hope & purity, being lavished with God's love & practicing righteousness are all tied together in these verses. They are all essential ingredients of the authentic Christian reality! John wants us to see this but is the former which produce the later!

2. *Christ Changes Our Habits (3:4-8)*

In verses 2:28-3:3 John makes two references to the second appearing of Christ (28, 2). In these verses we are told two things about the purpose of Christ's first appearing & each statement is followed by a logical consequence. Listen to verse 4-8; **"Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."**

John's logic goes something like this, in the words of John Stott; *"If Christ appears first to 'take away our sins' & to 'destroy the devil's work,' & if, when he appears a second time, 'we shall see him' &, in consequence, 'we shall be like him,' how can we possibly go on living in sin? To do so would be to deny the purpose of both his appearing."* This is what John wants his readers to see! In these verses John teaches that Jesus, the sinless one, came to take sins away & to destroy the works of the devil. Therefore if we are abiding in Christ he will be removing sin from our life & destroying the work of the devil so that the fruit of righteousness is produced. Yet be careful to note that even in these challenging verses the emphasis is still on the work of Christ! Christ is the sin remover & Christ is the devil destroyer. Our part is simply abiding in him so he can work in us by changes our habits.

From previous verses (1:8-2:2) & even the verses we're looking at today (3:2) we know John is not teaching sinless perfection. John's teaches rules out both hyper holiness teaching (we will not be perfect until we see him) & hyper grace teaching (lawlessness is not the fruit of grace). As someone put it; "The fruit of the Vine is proof of our faith. Not perfection—but fruit, even if a small bud." The verb "practice" or "commits" in the Greek conveys the idea of making sin a habitual practice. Sin is no longer the unbroken pattern of our lives. There is repentance & growing righteousness in the believer. Christ produces in us new habits of righteousness that are able to overcome & eventually destroy our old habits of sin. This will be evident in the true Christian. Although the true Christian still sins they cannot be committed to sin, nor can they continue in sin... When they do sin they call it sin & repent of sin, & trust in their Advocate & Righteous One to make them righteous. The habits of sin have been broken in the Christian's life & the habits of grace are growing so that one day when he appears we shall be like him! The struggle has not disappeared altogether but the story has been, is being, rewritten & Christ's is its author & finisher. The emphasis is on

Christ taking away sin, Christ destroying the works of the devil. Our changed habits are the consequence of his work on our behalf! Sanctification flows from justification, so again all we can do is do back to the only thing John tells us to do in these verses, abide in him – v6 **“No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen or known him.”**

3. New Birth Makes Us Righteous (2:29 & 3:9)

In verse 9 John says; **“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”** Did you hear that? The Christian **“cannot keep on sinning...”** John does not teach that the Christian *“cannot stop sinning”* but that the Christian **“cannot keep on sinning”!** Why? Because **“he has been born of God”!** This is true no matter the battle this morning! In 2:29 he said; **“If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born again.”** New birth makes us righteous!¹ The reference to God’s seed is a reference to the abiding anointing, the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who caused new birth in us abides in us... God seed abide in us, all the potential for change is planted within us. For this reason we cannot keep sinning! It is the abiding anointing that breaks the yoke of sin! Isaiah 10:27 says; **“And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken (destroyed) because of the fat (anointing oil).”** This removal of yoke spoke of a future liberation of Israel from compulsion to render service to foreign oppressors. Paul says to us in Romans 6:14 (cf. Rom 6:5-14); **“For sin will no longer have dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”**

The burden for transformation is not on us but it is within us through God’s abiding seed. The emphasis once again is not on us getting our act together, is on God’s work in us – it is because God’s seed abides & it is because we have been born again. It is the Holy Spirit working within us, righteousness is the fruit of new birth. It is not our work for God that makes us righteous, it is God’s work for & in us! So again let go back to the only thing we are told to do “abide in him” & do so with the knowledge that his seed abides in you. Christ destroys the work of the foreign oppressor in us by planting his powerful unstoppable seed within. .

When we put this altogether we realise it is hope in Christ’s second appearing that makes us holy, it is understanding the purpose of his first appearing that breaks sins hold on us & it is the work of the Spirit within that transforms the whole pattern of our lives!

Conclusion: Who’s Your Daddy? (3:10)

God has no grandchildren, only children & his children increasingly resemble him in righteousness & love. Only new birth can produce this family resemblance & if the kind of Christianity we have is not causing this resemblance to grow then something is wrong... The only answer is the real thing - new birth that enables

us to cry Abba Father in such a way that our lives reflect his character! Who are we, children of God or children of the devil? John basically teaches that the fruit of our lives will answer the question for us. I found a lot of good news in these verses but I also found this powerful challenge. Let's finish with Jesus' words in John 15:1-11 as we ask ourselves; are we abiding in him?