

## ABIDING IN CHRIST

16 March 2010

**Gen 15:6:** *And he (Abram) believed<sup>(539)</sup> in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* Here, a word study is invaluable for discovering the different nuances of the underlying Hebrew word translated 'believed'. Other meanings of the Hebrew are, "support, sustain, nourish, nurse, bear in the arms, trust & confide in." Abram was inwardly, or spiritually, nourished by the idea that God was going to give him a son from his own bowels. When a person takes a bite of an apple, they masticate, then swallow it, and within minutes the apple goes into the bloodstream. The nourishment is assimilated and becomes part of the physical body. To eat the words of the Bible (cf Rev 10:9-10; Eze 3:1-3) is to think on them, study, consider and receive the Lord's understanding, and then put into action what was received. Thus we assimilate Christ's understanding as nourishment for our spiritual body.

Spiritual nourishment, as well as how it is obtained, is taught in parables. Word studies are more complex when studying parables, as they usually contain several symbols. An example of a fairly simple one that Jesus used is the "vine", where there are three parts - vine, branches, and fruit, plus the vine dresser. **Jn 15:1-2:** *1. "I AM the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. 2. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* (Revised Standard).

Our heavenly Father is the "vine dresser" (KJ - husbandman), Jesus is the vine and I/you are the branches. A branch is part of the vine, and gets its nourishment and life from the vine, used figuratively here to illustrate that we get our nourishment and life through Christ, the Father being the source of it. Three individuals are involved - the Father, the Son of God and me/you. Now that I understand this parable, every time I visit a vineyard, I take time to consider the grape vines and reflect on the lessons taught.

Every year a vine dresser prunes the branches, and there is an abundance of fruit in the next harvest. Inwardly, the branches being trimmed represent the thoughts that lead us into sin. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered* (Jn 15:6). What many do not realize is that their thinking is not only based on a worldly life, but also on misunderstood religious teachings. I lived for decades in the world, and knew that what I was wrong. However, when I came to the Lord, I did not expect that the doctrines I had been taught might contain error. Remember, a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Cor 5:6-7). Therefore, I urge everyone to study for themselves, and seek the Lord for truth - purge the old leaven. God brought someone into my life who helped me get started. So don't neglect to listen to others, but do your own studying (cf Heb 13:2).

**Jn 15:3-5:** *3. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. 4 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. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* (RSV)

The parable of the vine was given the night before Jesus went to the cross, so the disciples had been with him over three years. A few minutes earlier, Judas left to betray Jesus. He did not let Christ purge the old leaven, the thoughts of personal gain, and not sacrifice for the sake of others. Jesus told the others, *You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you.* Paul also taught this: **Eph 5:25-26:** *25. ...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26. that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word...* We are cleansed by the words of the Savior, if, we receive and apply them to the heart. Our human way of thinking is cleaned by words as we abide in Christ, hearing

and doing as he instructs. It also takes time, and requires us to spend time daily with the Lord, and putting into practice what we learn. First, it requires some doctrinal correction, and this is what this parable teaches. God IS NOT a trinity, nor a triune (three in one) God. There is one God, the Father, and one Son of God, Jesus (Jn 17:1-3). Note: See a Godhead study, or one on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for deeper insight. As this foundational truth is built upon, the dead branches of error are pruned, and the fruit of the Spirit produced is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Gal 5:22-23).

The nourishment we receive from Jesus is “eternal life”, a quality of spiritual lift which leads, eventually, to immortality in the next world. **1 Jn 5:11:** *And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son.* (Webster’s Bible). This life was given to the Son by the Father (Jn 5:26), and it is eternal, because it is spiritual principles by which all who accept them will live by forever. What is the nourishment that provides this life? **Jn 15:7:** *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* We dwell in him by continually seeking him, and he dwells in us when we receive his ideas and opinions about how to live.

**Jn 6:63:** *63. It is the Spirit [giving life]; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* [Greek]. The spirit of Christ is the voice of Christ which nourishes us with words. By hearing and doing his spoken words (Mt 7:24), we receive spiritual nourishment to grow in grace (divine wisdom) and knowledge. THIS is abiding in Christ. Let’s make a distinction here - It is NOT the written word (Bible - Gal 3:21), but Christ’s understanding of the written word, and spoken to the heart which gives the nourishment. It is HIS knowledge by which we are justified. (Isa 53:11).

**Eph 5:8:** *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:* Jesus is the light, Jn 8:12. What does it mean to ‘walk in the light’? If you compare an individual walking into a church with one walking into a bar, what does that tell you about that person’s thinking? The feet are symbols of the direction of your heart, or thinking, and light is a symbol for understanding (Ps 119:130). So, walking in the light is the application of God’s impressions on your heart as spoken through Jesus.

**1 Jn 1:3, 6-7:** *3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ... 6. If we say that we have fellowship with him (the Father), and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7. But if we walk in the light, as he (the Father) is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.* Very clearly, we have two individuals - the Father and his Son, Jesus. The source of all light (understanding) comes from the Father through the Son to humanity. So, when we abide in the Son, we are abiding in the Father (cf Jn 17:21), and the blood of Jesus (i.e. understanding the cross) cleanses us from ALL sin. How are we cleansed by the blood of Jesus? The scripture plainly says, *if we walk in the light, as he (the Father) is in the light* we are cleansed. Do not miss the little word IF! Walk in the light by applying Christ’s understanding in your thoughts, conduct and forsake your sinful ways. Now, look at some other verses that deal with cleansing.

**Jn 5:36-40:** *36. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness about me, that the Father has sent me. 37. And the Father himself, having sent me, has witnessed concerning me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor have you seen his appearance. 38. And you have not his word abiding in you: because the one sent, this one you believed not. 39. You search the scriptures; because in them ye think ye have eternal life: indeed, these are they which testify of me. 40. And yet, you will not come to me, that you might have life.* [Greek Interlinear] Jesus told the Jews who were trying to kill him that the Father’s word was

not abiding in them, and later, they were told to clean the inside of the cup (Mt 23:26). The Jews were trying to get their righteousness out of the written word according to their own interpretation. Unless a person has the spiritual concepts of Jesus in their thoughts, they are not abiding in Christ, nor walking in the light. Let me make it clear, that it is not the amount of understanding that saves you, but the application of what you do have. *God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith* (Rom 12:3), and a spiritual child will be saved as well as the mature.

**Eph 5:25-26:** *25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up in behalf of it; 6 that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the washing of water with the word...* Jesus Christ will make his church holy and cleanse it with words of love!! Cleansing takes place, not when one just sits and listens to a preacher or teacher, but when the person assimilates what is being taught by the witness of Christ in the heart. Eat the Bible and seek the Lord to write his understanding on your heart, then apply it in your life.

Can we really hear the voice of Christ? **Jn 10:4-5:** *4 When he hath put forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* (American Standard). Most likely you will not hear an audible voice, but will merely have a feeling for what you hear. Be forewarned, the truth may be vastly different from what you think you know, and the intellect will rise against it. Search the scriptures AND go to Jesus for understanding.

**1 Jn 2:27:** *...the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him.* (RSV). This verse is not saying that a person has no need of assembling with other brothers and sisters for fellowship. When we listen to another teach, we test what we hear by our conscience and by seeking the Lord through personal Bible study, so God can write the spiritual understanding on the heart. Another person can tell you what God has told them, but it is God who confirms it in your heart.

**Jn 15:7-14:** *7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. 9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. 12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

Is there any question as to the meaning of abiding in Christ? Is there any question as to where the responsibility lies? If we choose life, the Father delivers it through his Son, Jesus Christ! We are likened to branches which receive spiritual nourishment from the vine (Jesus). What we receive must be assimilated in our lifestyle, and eventually we will manifest the image of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit. AMEN!