

**John (78) – Abide in Love**

**02/22/2026**

**Scripture 1: (Jn. 15:9-12 ESV)**

As the Father has loved me, so have I 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

## Sermon:

Jesus said, “*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. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*” (Jn. 15:4-5 ESV) talking about our union with Him.

- Jesus commands us to “abide”; to rest and remain; to be established, firmly settled, and attached to Him. Thus, abiding in Him, He must also abide in us. We must be so united, that there is no effective difference, division, or distinguishment between us. We must be “all in” Christ, and Christ must be “all in” us.
- Jesus called Himself “*the vine*” and He names us “*the branches*”. He declares us, those who “abide” in Him, to be extensions of Himself reaching out into the world.
- Jesus has appointed us and He empowers us, by His Holy Spirit, to be His agents in the world; to be His “image”; to act on His behalf and to do as He would do.

So, as far as the world should be concerned, Christians are as Christ. We may as well be Jesus, Himself, in their eyes. We should be so closely identified with Him that the world will respond to us as it would respond to Him (an idea that we will explore more later) and, we should also be so closely identified with Him that we will treat the world and everyone in it how Jesus would treat them; loving them as Jesus loved (and loves) us and them.

Next, Jesus continues to explain how we should respond to our union into Him, telling us, “*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*”. Jesus expects us to also {abide in His love}, while we still are trying to figure out how to {abide in Him}. The good news is, Jesus is actually going to tell us plainly how we may do both, since we shall {abide in Him} by {abiding in His love}. The “how” of this should really not surprise anyone, because it is nothing new. Jesus does not expect us to do anything new or different than we have always been expected to do. He explains, “*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.*”.

Now, you might ask, what about “grace” and “faith”? What about “mercy” and “forgiveness”? I thought it was, “*God is love...*” (1 Jn. 4:8 ESV) not {God is law}. Commandments mean “law” and “rules”. Commandments require “justice”, “judgment”, “condemnation”, and “wrath”. But, why do we often assume that “love” and “law” are incompatible or opposed to one another?

The answer is straight-forward and simple. We assume it because our sinful nature is opposed to both God's grace and His Law, preferring the oppressive law of Satan's sinful rule; a law that encourages us in the false hope that if we just try a little more, work a little harder, then we will be able to all that is required and thus earn our reward. It is that obnoxious little voice which tries to make us doubt; that asks us “Did God really say...?” and tells us that we can be just as wise and as knowledgeable as God (Genesis 3:1, 5). It is that remaining part of the “old us” within us that believes, “We know better.”; that insists, “If God really loved me...then God would let me...”; that argues, “True freedom is unlimited.” and that “Any restriction is tyranny.”.

However, the reality is that many common restrictions and limitations are actually good and very necessary.

- Why do we drive cars on the pavement instead of “cross-country”?
  - To avoid getting stuck or to avoid damaging our vehicle
- Why do we “Go” on green and “Stop” on red?
  - To avoid getting into accidents; to get to our destination in a timely and fair manner

- Why do we insist on the drivers of cars having a Driver's License and Car Insurance?
  - To ensure that the people who operate motor vehicles are trained in their operation; to ensure that in case of an accident, people or property that get injured or damaged are compensated for.

Ultimately, everyone agrees that such rules and regulations are beneficial and necessary. This is why you can never find a true, total anarchist. No one ever says that there can not, or should not ever be any rules; a declaration which would itself be a “rule” if enforced. Anarchy cannot be continue consistently because there must be an underlying order. That is why relativism always breaks down, because absolutes cannot be avoided or their presence denied.

So, since parents establish rules for their children to follow, in love, and, since parents establish them because parents know what is best, or most beneficial, for their children, establishing rules like:

- imposing a consistent bed time;
- requiring them to do their homework;
- requiring them to eat their whole dinner;
- requiring them to brush their teeth and wash their hands;

and, since the LORD God is who He claims and reveals Himself to be in the Bible, then His commandments must be understood similarly. God's commandments, Jesus's commandments, are understood as being issued in love, and issued for our good benefit and well-being. Just like a parent imposing rules for their children is a sign of the love they have for them, God's commandments are a similar expression of His love for us. Meanwhile, we push back and rebel against God's commandments just like children push back and rebel against their parent's rules. We rebel because we do not really understand “Why” the rules are there. We rebel because we wrongly believe that the rules limit our “fun” or enjoyment; because we cannot see how they are keeping us safe, or how they are teaching us to be more responsible.

- So, if we want to be abiding in Christ's love, then we need to keep His commandments, because our obedience is an expression of our love for Him; our obedience is our response of love, by loving Him in return.

Again, when Jesus said “*Abide in me*” and “*Abide in my love*”, He was not talking about us “getting saved”. Rather, He was talking about how we should respond to our “being saved”; to our being grafted into “*the true vine*” of Christ. Fortunately, Jesus also does not make us simply guess or assume how we should respond. He has given us the plain example of Himself. Jesus pointed to Himself and said, “I am the model for how you abide.”. He told us, “*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.*”. Obeying God's law is how we abide in Jesus's love, because Jesus's obedience to God's law is how He abides in God the Father's love. Our obedience matters but, it does not matter in the same way that Second Temple Judaism believed it does; nor does it matter in the way that Islam believes it does. Christian morality also does not matter in the same way that atheistic and pagan values work.

We are all obligated to obey God because He is our universal sovereign. We owe Him our allegiance and obedience because He is our Creator. God declared, “*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*” (Lev. 18:5 ESV); promising His people life eternal as a reward or benefit for their perfect personal obedience, just like He first promised Adam (Genesis 2:17).

- But, since our perfect obedience is expected, obligatory, and will benefit us if performed; eternal life becomes our due reward, for simply doing what we are already supposed to do, thereby making the work-righteousness systems of Judaism and Islam correct, right? Wrong.

- Judaism and Islam are wrong, utterly and completely wrong because they operate under a critically false assumption; assuming that it is possible for a human person to be perfectly obedient to the divine standard.
- Judaism and Islam are wrong because no one can meet that necessary requirement. No one can satisfy their own obligation.
- Judaism and Islam are wrong because they deny, reject, or ignore the fact of humanity's depraved nature and inherent sinfulness; assuming that, at worst, people are born morally neutral or, at best, people are born originally good.

Except for Jesus. Only Jesus, the God-man, could and only Jesus did. Only Jesus satisfied God's righteous requirement. Therefore, once the divine obligation was satisfied by Him, then, grace could be freely given to us.

Again, this is why our being united to Christ, our union with Christ, is so important for us. United, Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to us; meaning it counts as ours as well:

- His active obedience, all of the good that He did;
- as well as His passive obedience, all of the wrong that He never did (all of the rules that He never broke).

United to Christ, as far as God is concerned, we did all the same good that Jesus did and, we never did all the bad things that Jesus never did. Therefore, we have earned our right to eternal life; earned it through our faith and trust in Jesus and the promises of God. So, in a sense, we are saved by works: the works of Jesus, which count as ours by virtue of our union, and counted as ours by grace. So, although we really have not earned life, but rather we receive by grace, what Jesus has earned on our behalf, since we are grafted into His vine.

- So, since Jesus has kept His Father's commandments and therefore, abides in His Father's love, if we are abiding in Christ, then we have also been brought into our Father's love, right alongside Jesus.

Then, Jesus explains further, "*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*". He tells us that we are receiving this knowledge and understanding so that we may be filled with joy; so that our joy may be filled to the fullest. This is something worth being joyful about because this is the knowledge of our salvation; of our being redeemed by Jesus at the cost of His life, for the forgiveness of our sins; and knowledge of our blessed eternal reward, peace with God and eternal life in Christ's Kingdom. However, this is also not all about us. This is not all about our joy and our being loved.

The joy that we are filled with is not a simple joy; it is complex. It is layered and multi-faceted. It is the joy that we feel knowing that we are beloved by God. It is also the joy which God feels: that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit feel; knowing that we love them in return. This is the joy they feel when we keep Christ's commandments. This is why our obedience must be a response to God's grace and not the means of earning His favor, because God has already sovereignly grafted us in and given us to Christ; God had already shared and imputed Jesus's perfect obedience to us.

Therefore, in order to abide in Christ and to abide in His love for us, we must now keep His commandments. Our present and future obedience demonstrates the love, honor, and respect we feel for Jesus and our heavenly Father. Our obedience demonstrates how we continue to abide in Jesus and His love; both the good things we do and the bad things we no longer do (Galatians 1:20-21). Except, although we are saved, we still continue to sin (Romans 7:13-25).

What are we to make of that? Do we risk losing our salvation or, do we risk not remaining grafted into Christ's Body, even after God has given us to Jesus?

No, because when the Holy Spirit sets us to abide in Christ, we remain there. It is permanent and unchangeable. This is where our repentance, remorse, and contrition enter the picture.

United in Christ, we are declared just and righteous (Romans 3:21-25), despite our continuing to sin. Martin Luther had an expression for this, *simul justus et peccator*, “at once justified and a sinner”<sup>1</sup>. We are declared to be one thing, while we are presently something else. However, this is not a contradiction because, when God, the Sovereign of the Universe, declares us to be something, we become it, in truth. Yet how is that just, how is that “fair” for Him to do?

- It is fair and just because Jesus already paid the entire penalty required for each of our sins, through dying on the cross. He suffered for all of our sins from before the moment we were saved, and He has also already suffered for all of the sins that we shall still sadly commit after that moment, right up until we die.
- But, although Jesus has paid the ultimate penalty for our sins, we do not receive the benefit of it (we are not actually forgiven and we do not have our guilt removed) until after we confess and repent of those sins. We must still respond and accept the grace He has given for, as John tells us elsewhere, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 Jn. 1:9 ESV). God is just to forgive us because satisfaction and restitution has already been made for us by Jesus.

This is also another reason why our present obedience is evidence for our abiding in Christ and for abiding in His love. We want to obey Christ and God our Father, out of our love for Him because we now understand the true cost of our sin. Now, we know the cost that Jesus has paid for each of our personal sins. Now, we do not want to sin. Now, we do not want to continue in our sinfulness, because we are now aware of the unimaginable and incomprehensible pain, suffering, and sorrow that our sins have caused Jesus to experience. Now, because of our love for Jesus, we do not want to make that penalty any worse than it had to be. Now, we should want to do everything we can to lessen it.

Finally, Jesus concludes the thought that He began in John 13:34, “*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*”. Jesus commands us to follow His example of love; to love others as He loves; to love as He loves us. This is why “What Would Jesus Do?” or better yet, “How would Jesus love in this situation?” are reasonable and helpful questions. Every time, the answer to such questions will be whatever is right, and true, and good; whatever most honors God and brings Him glory.

- So, do this and you will be abiding in Jesus's love.
- Do this and you will be abiding in the Father's love.
- Do this and know that you abide in Jesus and that your joy shall be full because it is His joy in you.

Now, I must comment briefly against the subtleties of the antinomian heresy; against those who incorrectly believe (partly on account of this portion of John's Gospel) that the only moral commandments we (Christians) are obligated to follow, are those that were specifically commanded by Jesus in the Gospels (New Covenant Theology<sup>2</sup>, and traditional Anti-nomian heretics<sup>3</sup>). They try to limit them by citing “*If you keep my commandments...*”, while ignoring the truth that all of Scripture is the *verbum dei*: the Word of God; and thus, entirely the words of Jesus, the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*. They intentionally forget, or ignore, that all of the commandments are Christ's commandments.

1 [https://www.ligonier.org/posts/simul-justus-et-peccator?srsltid=AfmBOoo\\_Wcj\\_yd\\_m1q1t81MwEe5VDMzGqVxCqvA7UW08BsRf256SM1h\\_](https://www.ligonier.org/posts/simul-justus-et-peccator?srsltid=AfmBOoo_Wcj_yd_m1q1t81MwEe5VDMzGqVxCqvA7UW08BsRf256SM1h_)

2 <https://allthingsnewcovenant.com/2018/11/02/what-is-new-covenant-theology/>

3 <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-is-antinomianism-and-who-teaches-it/>

However, in this moment in the “Upper Room”, it is clear that Jesus was not talking about all of the ceremonial instructions given to Moses, nor was He meaning all of the specific “case law” precedents, but rather, the moral commandments that are universal and unchanging and have been in effect since before creation. Every divine commandment within Scripture is derived from, or related to, some aspect of this Moral Law.

We, as confessional Presbyterians, believe that “The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.” (WSC #41) and that its sum is “...to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.” (WSC #42), according to how Jesus answered when He was asked, “*What is the great[est] commandment?*” (Matthew 22:36-40). This is what and how we understand the “*law of Christ*” (Gal. 6:2 ESV) to be; how we understand what Jesus's commandments are. This distinction is the historical orthodox position of the Church, but also, throughout church history there have always been those who reinterpret this and try to limit our Christian obedience to just those commandments that Jesus commanded, commended, or affirmed in the Gospels; but, that is a very false teaching.

- Jesus affirmed our worship of the LORD God alone (Mark 12:29); **First Commandment.**
- Jesus spoke against taking the LORD's Name in vain, against wrongfully invoking Him in oath taking (Matthew 23:16-22); **Third Commandment.**
- Jesus commanded us to rightly honor our fathers and mothers (Mark 7:9-13; John 19:26); **Fifth Commandment.**
- Jesus prohibited murder, even expanding that prohibition to include anger (Matt 5:21-22); **Sixth Commandment.**
- Jesus condemned adultery, fornication, along with all forms of sexual immorality, unchasteness, dishonesty, covetousness, and theft (Mark 7:21-23); **Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Commandments.**

Such false teachers argue that since Jesus specifically commanded these, these are the only moral commandments we must follow and obey, as Christians. Ironically, these also seem to be the ones that are usually least inconvenient to keep.

Then, they argue that because Jesus taught that it was lawful to heal others on the Sabbath and asserted that “*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.*” (Mk. 2:27-28 ESV), He was thereby rejecting the practice of Sabbath-keeping. They will further argue that since Jesus never spoke against making images of God (something contextually unnecessary) then, making pictures of Jesus: drawings, paintings, movies, or TV shows about Him; may be permissible (and even encourage-able).

- Such false teachers teach that preserving the sanctity of the LORD's Day is not a moral issue.
- Such false teachers teach that the question about whether or not there is some positive virtue in images of Jesus, or any of the Three Persons of the Trinity; virtue in creating logically false images of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) or of the intentionally un-described (in specific detail) Jesus (Isaiah 53:2); is not a moral issue.

But such teachings are demonstrably false when the whole of Scripture is considered and when our God-given reason is employed. Once you recognize that such popular, “lowest common denominator”, “cultural Christianity” only affirms the moral requirements of eight of Ten Commandments (8/10), then suddenly the popular support for the NFL on Sunday and the acceptance of TV shows like *The Chosen*, among professing Christian's starts to make a lot more sense. Suddenly you see why it is only the strictest, most obviously devout, and serious Christians who will even consider a Sunday evening worship service. {Suddenly, the increased

popularity of requests by Teaching Elders, across all of the different Presbyterian denominations, asking for confessional exceptions to the Second and Fourth Commandments makes a lot more sense.}

- Such false teachers also use this same reasoning to argue that because Jesus never spoke directly about homosexuality in the Gospels, that He must not be opposed to it. They use this to suggest that at the worst, it is morally neutral. People who follow this kind of interpretive thought process ignore homosexuality's clear condemnation by both the Old Testament and Paul (Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 8:9).
- Such false teachers use this same argument to justify support for abortion, in contradiction to the Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13) and, for legal marijuana consumption, in clear contradiction of Peter's admonishment to “*be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*” (1 Pet. 4:7 ESV).

But, no. As Christians, united with Jesus Christ, we remain obligated to and are expected to obey the whole moral law, as our response of obedient love for Jesus and our heavenly Father. Thus and therefore, we must live according to Jesus's example, since He commanded us, “*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*”

- We must love as He loved, so that we shall abide in His and the Father's love.
- We must love as He loved, so that we shall be abiding in Him.
- We must love as He loved, so that, all people will know that we are Christ's disciples; so that they will know we are Christians; so that we shall prove we belong to the “*true vine*” of Jesus Christ.

Now, while I dislike the triteness of the popular, guiding question, “What Would Jesus Do?”, I do admit that it is helpful to guide our application of this text, since the immediate and primary application of Jesus's command for us to “*...love one another as [He has] loved [us].*”, is for us to follow Jesus's example in how He treated His disciples.

So, how did He treat them and how may we do likewise?

- He called them out and away from their ordinary and routinely comfortable lives. He called them to live differently; self-sacrificially and He charged them to consider others before themselves and to consider them better.
  - So, perhaps we could all think more highly of others and better consider the needs and feelings of others before we act and speak?
- He taught them. He taught them how to rightly understand God's word and how to apply it to life situations.
  - So, perhaps those of us with more knowledge, experience and/or wisdom can share that with those who do not; while perhaps those of us who lack such experience would benefit by listening, paying attention to, and learning from the advice and knowledge of others?
  - Perhaps those of us who diligently study our Bibles and/or theology could step up to teach more frequently; sharing what we have learned and come to understand, while those of us who may have not studied Scripture as much or, as well as we would have liked (or know that we should have), could make the effort to study more; to attend and participate, and to be more personally intentional in their own personal study.

How did Jesus treat other people? How did He treat people who were not His follower or disciple?

- He showed them compassion. Those who were ill or injured, He healed at their request; often telling them “...*your faith has made you well...*” (Mk. 5:34 ESV), because merely asking Jesus was a sign of their faith since no one would ask if they do not think or believe that someone could help.
  - So, perhaps we can all be more compassionate, as well? Perhaps, when someone asks us for help, we can look for more ways (can look harder) to say “Yes” rather than quickly answering “No” and turning away or, instead of simply assuming that there is no help available.
- Jesus intentionally went out of His way to associate with those who did not believe in Him; those who were not following Him; those whom society considered accursed, unrighteous, or sinful. However, when He was with such people, He did not affirm their sinfulness. He did not signal His approval of whatever wrongs they were guilty of. Instead, He was kind and considerate to them, relating to them on the level of their shared common humanity, and He shared a better way with them; He called them out and away from their sinful wickedness and He invited them into a loving relationship with Him.
  - So, when was the last time **you** intentionally engaged or interacted with an individual, or group of people, whom you know are not believers; whom you know are not Christ followers? When was the last time **you** placed yourself into that kind of situation intentionally, for the purpose of sharing the love of Jesus with them; entering into it hoping for an opportunity to share Jesus with them?

We all, each need to comprehend and act accordingly to this true understanding:

- The best and most loving thing someone can do for, or do towards, another person (the “good-est, good work possible) is to share Jesus with them and offer them the hope of the Gospel: the good news about our redemption from sin and judgment, by God's grace, through personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. alone.
- Likewise, the worst and most hateful thing someone can do for, or do towards, another person (the most wicked and evil thing imaginable) is to withhold Christ from somebody; to deny someone the opportunity to know Jesus; to deny them the opportunity to have hope and gain true joy and peace; to leave them in their state of condemnation and sin, without hearing that they have the possibility to repent and be forgiven, and to have their entire lives changed by God.
  - If you have honestly and truly experienced that “experience” for yourself, why do you want to deny someone else that same opportunity?
  - Why do you not act as if you want EVERYONE else around you to experience the love of God and the forgiveness of their sins?

Jesus gave Himself to us. He gave Himself for us; for our salvation; for our redemption from sin and for our forgiveness before God, our Father in heaven.

- If Jesus gave Himself to us as an act of love then, if you withhold Jesus from anyone; if you refuse to share Jesus with other people, then can you honestly say that you love them as Jesus loved you, first?
- Are you honestly loving God with your whole being, by limiting (by gate-keeping) who may enter into His Kingdom?
- If you are truly grateful and thankful for your salvation and your union with Jesus Christ, then, are you honestly loving your neighbor as yourself if you will not share Jesus with them, even though someone else once shared Jesus with you?

**AMEN**