

## Disciples Abide In Christ's Word John 8:31-36

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

What does it mean to abide in Christ's word? Jesus Christ is true God - begotten of the Father from eternity. And we know God's command summarized in ten simple phrases, the Ten Commandments were given for just that purpose. Given by God, to Moses, for His people, those Ten Commandments are God's Word directing his children how to live their lives in love toward God and in love toward their neighbor.

However, by the time Jesus takes on human flesh and comes into the world, the Jewish teachers of the law had watered down those commandments. If it outwardly **appeared** you were **not BREAKING** God's laws, you were keeping them.

Then, along comes Jesus, and shatters that understanding, He says that what happens in the heart is also a violation of those same commandments.

Jesus calls hatred murder. He declares that if you call someone names, you have killed them in your heart. Jesus explains that you don't have to lie with a woman who isn't your wife to commit adultery with her, all you have to do is look at her with lustful desire in your heart, that too is adultery.

Love of God is shown by how you love your neighbor, and if you do not love all your neighbors, including your enemies, you do not love God. In another place, Jesus explain, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." (Mt. 25:45) He proclaims that those who are not willing to forgive, will not be forgiven by God

So, how many of you abide in Christ's Word? You know the truth. Do you live your life in complete obedience to God's Word? If you abide in the Word of God, you will be free.

Free from what? I am guessing that you are thinking, "I'm not a slave. I live in America. We outlawed slavery years ago."

That's very similar to what they thought in Jesus' day too. They thought of themselves as descendants of Abraham, never enslaved to anyone. How could they be made free, if they were not enslaved. Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

The same is true today. Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. So, are any of you enslaved? Are you enslaved to the lusts and desires of your body which are in contradiction to God's Word? Are you enslaved to the sin of hatred of your neighbor? Are you enslaved by your eyes and your loins, committing adultery in heart or with your body? Are you enslaved to your

tongue, which speaks evil before your brain has a chance to react?

Are you enslaved to the world thinking that you have no necessity to be in God's Word on a daily basis? Are you enslaved to your daily tasks? Does your job, taking care of your body, the care of your family, the weekly constraints of a life that is too busy become the excuse for why you neglect time in the Scriptures and daily prayer? Is it all sorts of things that come first in your life, while God get squeezed in, only when you have time, because you do not love Him with all your heart, and mind, and soul, therefore He is not first and foremost in your life?

Thank goodness today is a Packer late game, and out of town. Who knows how many might be otherwise be enslaved to TVs or to tailgate even now, and neglecting this special opportunity to receive God's great gifts to us again.

The truth? You and I are enslaved to sin.

Listen again to Jesus' words, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Many people think that they will free themselves from sin. They think they can do it, if they only try harder. Some commit themselves to making a more concerted effort to curb the desires of their flesh. Others promise to devote more time to the study of God's Word and prayer. Many pledge to exert their will in order to love their neighbor, or at least tolerate him, forgive him, and no longer hate him. In this manner, they will set themselves free from their bondage to sin.

To be honest, the harder we study God's law and try to keep it, the more able we are to see that we are not accomplishing what we desire. The stronger our faith, the more we understand God's Law. The further we try to run away from sin, the more we realize we are entrapped and entangled in it even deeper. God's Law doesn't leave us guiltless, it shows us even more and more that sin is indeed a deadly evil from which we cannot escape. The better we understand God's Law, the more clearly that we are *poor sinners. That we truly are by nature sinful and unclean, having sinned against God in thought, in word, and in deed.*

Paul's words from our Epistle lesson to the Romans come to mind.

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:19-20 ESV)

We are enslaved to sin. On our own, we are helpless to fix this problem. Who can save us from this body of death? Some excuse themselves by saying that God cannot be so angry with sin, He is a loving God and a loving God would never punish anybody. Wishful thinking!!! You and I know this is not truth, but a lie.

Luther got to this point in his thinking. He was very depressed that he was helpless to fix the problem he had with sin. Thankfully, Luther didn't explain away God's wrath against sin. He knew God was justified in His righteous anger against sin. But not yet fully understanding the

Gospel, Luther tried all in his power to free himself from the wrath of God against his own sin.

Luther wrote about this mind set of his, how he was angry with God.

*Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that He was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with His righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. (M. Luther; "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings" (1545), in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 11.)*

Indeed, if left with only the Law of God, something in which we cannot live as God desires, what would we have but a terrified conscience, just as did Luther? Where indeed is hope to be found? How can one be freed from sin and have the fear of God's wrath against sin removed?

Jesus told you. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (Jn 8:36)

To be a disciple is to abide in the Word of Christ. Yes, you must understand your failures to fully keep the law. At the same time, you and I are to continue making the effort to love God with your whole heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. And then, repent! Repent of your sin and abide in Christ's Word.

The disciples who truly abide in Christ's Word, live their life in the Word of Christ that comes to you and deals with your sin. What word is that? It is the word of forgiveness He purchased with His innocent life and His suffering and death. It is the word Christ delivers to those who trust in Him for their salvation.

The Word of the Law, drives the believer to the Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ!

Christ was the sacrificial redemption God put forward as payment for the sins of all people. On the cross atonement was made, His blood was shed to buy freedom from sin. He rose three days later to show victory over sin accomplished. That is God's righteousness. God's righteousness isn't fulfilled by your accomplishing the demands of God's holy and righteous Law made upon you and me. No, God's law is fulfilled in Christ and His righteousness is given freely by God's grace to us in the very Word of Christ. Christ fulfilled the Law for you, and in you today.

Abide in Christ's Word. Through water and His Word, you are baptized into His death and resurrection, and your sins have been washed away - in the name of the Father and of the Son and of Holy Spirit. In daily contrition and repentance, in that Word of your baptism, you are daily raised in Christ who lives in you a new life.

Abide in Christ's Word. Hear the Word spoken to you, "your sins are forgiven." In that Word,

the blood of Christ cleanses you from all sin. Hear the Word of Christ's peace, a peace that passes all understanding, bestowed upon you. Abide in Christ's Word, your conscience is freed from its bondage to guilt, for no sin remains in you.

Abide in Christ's Word. Christ speaks, "Take eat, this is my body... Take drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you for the remission of sin."

Dearly beloved of God, abide in Christ's Word. These are His gifts to you of His Word, and in them the Son sets you free, and in them, you are free indeed! Amen.