

November 1, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Abiding

1 John 2:24-29

1. Abide in the Teaching (verses 24-27).

2. Abide in Him (verse 28-29).

I invite you to open your Bibles up to 1 John, chapter 2. Our text this morning covers verses 24-29. My message is simply entitled, "Abiding," because, that is the major theme in these verses.

In the book of 1 John, we see several themes that John deals with over and over and over again. It's what makes preaching through this book so difficult. Because John is rarely moving on to anything new. Instead, he cycles through the same things over and over again. It's the challenge of the preacher to bring variety in this book.

There is the theme of obedience. Those who know God will obey his commandments. They will walk in righteousness and purity. There is the theme of love. Those who know God will love one another. There is the theme of truth. Those who know God will follow the truth, and not be led astray into error. There is the theme of belief. Those who know God will believe and trust in Jesus. We see other smaller themes, like light and darkness, like life and death, like eternal and "passing away." And John brings these themes up often in his little letter.

Well, this morning, we will pick up one of John's major themes. It is the theme of abiding. This word, abide (or abides or abiding) occurs more than 20 times in the book of 1 John. 1 John has 5 chapters. So, is mentioned some four times each chapter! That's a lot for such a small book.

Some translations use the word, "remain." The idea is one of "being with" or "living with" or "dwelling in." It describes a close association with something.

And the usage is mostly metaphorical. Picture a happy household, where perhaps people are visiting or spending the night. Sometimes it is used to describe abiding (or dwelling) in God (2:6). Sometimes it is used to describe abiding in the light (2:9) -- that is, living with completely righteous character. Sometimes it is used to describe God's word abiding in us (2:14) -- similar to what we think of the Spirit indwelling us. Sometimes, it's simply a synonym for "living" -- "Whoever does the will of God abides forever" (2:17). That is, he lives forever.

Well, in our text this morning, in our 6 verses, we will see the word occur 6 times! Thus, the reason why my message is entitled, "Abiding." It is the theme of these verses.

Now, this isn't the first time that this word has occurred in 1 John. We have seen it before.

1 John 2:6

whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1 John 2:10

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

1 John 2:14

... I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

So, it's not like we haven't seen this word before. But, this is the first time that it has come with such concentration. In chapter 4:11-18 the word will be used extensively as well. Let's read our verses.

1 John 2:24-29

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and

not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

Did you notice how many times the word, “abiding” came up in this passage? Did you notice how many times it appeared in verse 24 alone? Three times.

I want for you to look at the first time it is used. Because this forms the basis for my first point this morning.

1 John 2:24
Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.

My first point is, ...

1. Abide In the Teaching (verses 24-27).

John is constantly bringing his readers back to “the beginning.” That’s how this whole letter began, ...

1 John 1:1
That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, ...

He’s constantly bringing them back to what they heard in the beginning to tell them that it isn’t any new thing that he’s bringing in his letter. Rather, it’s the old teaching that they had heard before.

1 John 2:7
Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

And when John talks about that which was from the beginning, he says, “Let that abide in you” (verse 24). In other words, John was telling his readers to let the words that you heard at first dwell in you. Think on them. Meditate on them. Let them run through your minds. Let the teaching of the truth of the gospel have its home in your heart and in your soul.

There are plenty of things that you hear, and even enjoy, but soon forget. The daily weather report doesn’t “abide” in you. Oh, it may live for the day, but soon it is gone. The daily news doesn’t “abide” in you. You read it. You remember it. But, it doesn’t “abide” in you. It’s not precious to you. You don’t think on it day and night. The comics may give you a smile for a moment, but they don’t abide in you. They soon fly away. And it makes you search for the next one.

For instance, how many comic strips can you remember? If I said to you right now, “What are your favorite comic strips?” Now, I’m not talking about saying “Peanuts” or “Blonde” or “Beetle Bailey.” I’m talking about a single strip that makes a funny point. Can you describe some of your favorites?

Now, perhaps you can, especially if you are a comic-strip junkie. But, my guess is that most of you have read a few comic strips in your day, and have enjoyed them. But now, in the moment, it’s difficult to think of any of them in particular.

But, John’s call here is different. He’s calling for us to “let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.” He’s talking about the preciousness of the gospel seeking deep into your heart, that it becomes a delight to your soul. It’s something that you think about all the time!

At Kids KLUB, we are working on memorizing Psalm 1 together. It speaks of the godly man.

Psalm 1:1-2
Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

That’s what John is talking about here in verse 24. Delighting in God’s word. Meditating on God’s word, day and night. That is, hold it precious in your heart. Hold it close, not ever letting go.

A this point, I have another opportunity to encourage you to a life of Scripture memory. How else can God’s word abide in you, unless you memorize it and it become entrenched deep within you? That’s almost the definition of “abiding.” For God’s word to abide in your heart, it must take up residence in your heart and live there. And the only way to do that is through memorization.

Is the gospel abiding in you? Do you know it? Do you think upon it? Is it almost second nature to you?

I want to try something. Turn to the person right next to you. I'm going to give you a minute for you to tell the person next to you the truth of the gospel. And then, after a minute, we are going to change roles. And they will have a minute to tell you the gospel.

Here's the deal. If the gospel is abiding in you, this should be no problem. But, if it is a problem, it may just expose the reality that the gospel isn't abiding in you.

It's good for us to go back to the basics. It's good for us to go back to the beginning. Because, this is the reality of where we stand. 1 Corinthians 15:1 says, "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand." This is where we stand. We stand on the gospel.

And, there's a danger. The danger is in going on ahead, as if the gospel isn't quite enough. Or, there are other things that delight your fancy. Look over at 2 John and verse 9.

2 John 9

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

If you fail to abide in the teaching of Christ, you don't have God. If you "go on ahead" to something else, you don't have God.

Wasn't this the error of those in Galatia? Paul told them, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).

There were some who came into the churches in Galatia, and were distorting the gospel. They were distorting what they heard "from the beginning." They were "going on ahead," to use John's terms. And how were they doing this? When you put some other clues together in the epistle to the Galatians, you can see that they were falling back into the ways of Judaism. By faith, they were set free in the gospel, but, they simply couldn't shed the law. They held that people must keep the law if they were to be saved -- circumcision, dietary requirements, feasts and festivals.

This was Paul's point in Galatians 3:2-3, "Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:2-3). In other words, beginning by faith, are you now being perfected by works? Or, to use John's language, they failed to abide in what they "heard from the beginning."

And something similar was taking place in John's situation. Last week, we read of these "antichrists" who were coming in and drawing people away from Jesus. That's why they were called "antichrists," because they were "anti" the Messiah (2:18, 22). They were against Jesus.

But, in John's situation, I don't think that they fell into the errors of Judaism, because you don't see John spelling out the dangers of reverting to the law. If anything, John was extolling the law.

1 John 2:3

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

1 John 5:3

This is the love of God that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Though, I don't think that John had in mind the legal requirements of the law. The error of John's day had more to do with the person of Christ. The error of John's day had more to do with those who were claiming some special knowledge of Jesus.

Remember John's emphasis from last week's text? "You know the truth" is what he said to them. You know that antichrists are coming. Don't worry (verse 18). You know that people will leave your fellowship (verse 19). You have an anointing (verse 20). So, you don't need to follow those who claim some special knowledge. But, there are those who "go on ahead." They seek something beyond. And those who do so, do so to their own peril.

Isn't that what 2 John 9 says? "Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). That's why we need to Abide in the Teaching (verses 24-27).

Abiding in God's word is the path to abiding in God. That's exactly what our text says. Turn back to 1 John. Again, verse 24, ...

1 John 2:24

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

The path to abiding in God is letting God's word abide in you. You say, what is that word? Verse 25, ...

1 John 2:25

And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

I trust you remember (because I have mentioned it in almost every message in 1 John), that John writes that you might have the assurance of eternal life.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

And here in verse 25, we see John telling us that eternal life is the promise of what was taught to these people at the beginning.

1 John 2:25

And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

This is in contrast to the life in this world. Look back at verse 17.

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, ...

This world is but a fleeting place. All of its desires and pleasures will fade away. But God has promised us something better than this life. He has promised us "eternal life." That's how verse 17 ends, ...

1 John 2:17

... but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

You follow in God's ways, and you will have eternal life. Isn't this what the most famous verse in the Bible says? "God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Life is in the Son! Eternal life comes through faith in the Son.

Look over at chapter 4 and verse 9, ...

1 John 4:9

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

Life comes through Jesus. God has made this promise of eternal life. And he will keep this promise. Now, there may be people who try to persuade you otherwise, but don't follow in their ways. Again, back to our text, ...

1 John 2:26

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

Deceivers were in the world in John's day. Deceivers are in the world in our day. So, if someone comes to you and tells you that faith in Jesus won't bring you eternal life, don't believe them. If someone comes to you and seeks to show you a better way, don't believe them.

Do you remember the story of Pilgrim's Progress? Christian had a burden on his back. And he longed to get rid of it. He met a man named Evangelist, who told him to flee the City of Destruction and go to the wicket gate. There, his burden (of sin) would be dealt with.

But, along the way, Christian met a man named Worldly Wiseman, who turned him from the path. He said, "Why, in yonder village (the village is named Morality) there dwells a gentleman whose name is Legality, a very judicious man, and a man of a very good name, that has skill to help men off with such burdens as thine is from their shoulders; yea to my knowledge, he hath done a great deal of good this way; aye, and besides, he hath skill to cure those that are somewhat crazed in their wits with their burdens. To him, as I said, thou mayest go, and be helped presently."

And so, Christian was diverted from the straight and narrow to seek to get rid of his burden through the deeds of the law. And how many there are in this world who have been diverted from the straight and narrow to the broad ways of the world? How many children grow up in church, hearing the precious gospel, only to turn away through friends at school, through teachers in college, through something that they read?

According to the word of God, these are deceivers -- those who would seek to turn you out of the way. But, you don't need to be deceived, because (as we talked about last week), you have the anointing and you know what is true.

This is what verse 27 says.

1 John 2:27

But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

The anointing abides in you. The teaching abides in you. And it's all directing you to one place. Abiding in Jesus. See that there in the last phrase? That's the message that John has been preaching from the beginning: abide in him.

In fact, that is my second point this morning. First, Abide in the Teaching (verses 24-27). Second, ...

2. Abide in Him (verse 28-29).

1 John 2:28-29

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

John calls us to abide and dwell in Jesus. You say, "What does that look like?" First of all, it looks like a life with no shame. That's what John brings us to in verse 28.

1 John 2:28

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

We should be ready for His return. Our house should be "in order."

I remember reading a short story one time that helped to show how we need to be holy to please the Lord. It's called, "My Heart Christ's Home," written by Robert Munger. In this story, he imagines his heart to be like a home, in which Jesus is coming to visit.

Jesus first enters the library, where Robert Munger was delighted to show him all of the things that his mind was reading and thinking about. As Jesus walked through it and looked at the books and the magazines, he wasn't impressed. For, there were many things in his mind that weren't pleasing to God.

And so, Jesus told him, "Take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, pure, good and true, and throw them out! Now put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible. Fill the library with Scriptures and meditate on them day and night."

Next, they entered the dining room, the room of "appetites and desires." Mr. Munger served Jesus some of his favorite dishes: money, academic degrees and stocks, with newspaper articles of fame and fortune as side dishes. To his great concern, Jesus wasn't eating any of these things.

Jesus told him, "If you want food that really satisfies you, seek the will of the Father, not your own pleasures, not your own desires, and not your own satisfaction. Seek to please Me and that food will satisfy you." Jesus then gave him a taste of doing God's will and Mr. Munger replied, "What a flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. It alone satisfies. Everything else is dissatisfying in the end."

Next, they moved into the living room, which was a comfortable, quiet room, filled with overstuffed chairs and a sofa. Jesus promised to meet him in this room every day. At first, Mr. Munger met faithfully with him at the beginning of every day. But, due to the busyness of life, he began to neglect their early morning meeting together. Convicted, he said in his heart, "[Jesus] was my guest. ... And yet here I am neglecting Him." When he came to Jesus and confessed his sin, Jesus readily forgave him and reminded him of the importance of fellowship with God.

From the living room, they went to the work room, where he had a workbench and some equipment. Mr. Munger confessed that once in a while he would play around with a few little gadgets, but wasn't producing anything substantial or worthwhile. It was only when he relaxed his hands in the hands of Jesus and let the Spirit of Jesus work through him that he began to make some really nice things.

They began to go into the Rec room, but Mr. Munger didn't want Jesus to see the "associations and friendships, activities and amusements" that he was involved with. And so, he made up some excuse why they couldn't go into the Rec room.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Munger found Jesus in the hallway. Jesus said to him, "There is a peculiar odor in the house. There is something dead around here. It's upstairs. I think it is in the hall closet." Mr. Munger gave the following testimony, "I knew what He was talking about. Yes, there was a small closet up there on the landing, just a few feet square, and in that closet, behind lock and key, I had one or two little personal things that I did not want anyone to know about and certainly I did not want Christ to see them."

Regarding this allegorical closet of Mr. Munger's, he said, "I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from the old life. And yet I loved them, and I wanted them so for myself that I was afraid to admit they were there." After a bit of reluctance, he gave the key to Jesus, but confessed that he didn't have the strength to clean the closet himself. Jesus said, "Just give me the key. Just authorize me to take care of that closet and I will." Jesus then "walked over to the door, opened it, entered it, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet and painted it, fixed it up, doing it all in a moment's time." It was a relief to Mr. Munger, who said, "Oh, what victory and release to have that dead thing out of my life!"

As life continued on, Mr. Munger said to himself, "I have been trying to keep this heart of mine clear for Christ. I start on one room and no sooner have I cleaned that then another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first room becomes dusty again. I am so tired and weary trying to maintain a clean heart and an obedient life. I am just not up to it!" Then, he turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, is there any chance that You would take over the responsibility of the whole house and operate it for me and with me just as You did that closet? Would You take the responsibility to keep my heart what it ought to be and my life where it ought to be?"

Jesus replied to him, "Certainly, that is what I came to do. You cannot be a victorious Christian in your own strength. That is impossible. Let me do it through you and for you. That is the way."

It was then that Mr. Munger transferred the title deed of his house over to Jesus, and deemed Jesus no longer to be merely a guest in the house, but to be the Lord and owner of the house. He said, "Things are different since Jesus Christ has settled down and has made His home in my heart."

And really, that's the question for us all. Are you abiding in Jesus? Is Jesus abiding in you?

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