

A Commandment

Obeying through Abiding



Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

—John 15:4

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My Disciples.

—John 15:8

Abiding in Heaven's Heart

WHEN MY DAUGHTER, Angela, was four years old, she asked if Jesus is Heaven's Heart. I said, "Yes."

And ... *we* are the love of His heart. God's theme has always been the same towards us.

I want you with me!

Doesn't this grab you?

The whole Bible is about God's love affair with His people on earth. Beginning with the beginning, in a garden, when God walked in the cool of the evening with Adam and Eve; to Moses, where God's people stood between the sea and a vengeful king, and God told them to stand still and see what He would do for them. And the Gospel of

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John, where Jesus says, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you, abide in My love” (John 15:9).

Once we let the love of God grab our hearts, we begin to learn to abide, or live in His love. He tells us in John 15 that He will work in our affairs to show us how to live and that without Him, we can do nothing that will have any lasting value. He will cut away at all things that are worthless in our lives, even when it hurts, because we disagree with Him. He tells us that as we trust Him and let Him change us, our desires will become the kind of desires that He can delight to grant us when we ask.

Later in the chapter, it says that God *chooses* us! He chooses us for special projects that will have lasting value. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My Name, He may give you” (John 15:16).

What an awesome statement! He chooses us. He appoints us. He gives us special work to do. Our work will be lasting. In doing this work, we can ask Him anything, and He will do it for us.

As we obey Him, we find great joy in pleasing Him and seeing what He will do in our lives.

I woke up one night from a dream that left me shaken. In the dream, bombs dropped from the sky like fireballs all around the neighborhood. In horror I watched as my husband ran down the street trying to dodge bombs. I braced myself on the front porch of my house under the protection of the roof and clutched my children close to me.

I awoke afraid and drenched in sweat.

I didn't expect to go back to sleep but I did very quickly, only to dream again.

This time I was the new owner of a house badly in need of repair. In spite of the ramshackle condition, I was pleased the house belonged to me. I awoke this time relaxed and with a sense of wellbeing.

I puzzled over those dreams. Although I knew nothing about dream interpretation, I knew these were significant. Most of my life I had dismissed dreams, but these did not go away. Several years later, the meanings became plain to me.

The situation at home constantly increased with tension. Strange, new difficulties arose all the time, and I had no idea how to respond.

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God is gracious to give us subtle warnings of things to come when we are alert to His voice speaking to us through the Holy Spirit.

In the first dream I believe God warned me that in the terrible times to come, Dean would try to escape but would be a moving target in the very act of escape. He would be hit over and over. As long as I abided under the cover of the porch and held my children close, we would be safe though the bombs would drop all around us.

This surely pictured the way our life together unfolded. With each situation, Dean sought ways of numbing pain, but only succeeded in increasing it. The children and I met with similar pain and we chose a different route. In spite of frequent panic, we prayed and waited for God's presence to comfort us. We read the Bible for instruction and looked for outside help wherever we could find it. We chose to abide in the place of safety.

The second dream referred to a house that represented the soul of a Christian, brand new, yet in dilapidated condition. The renovation would take time but it would be shaped eventually. Jesus moved into this house, and I could abide here safely with Him.

God had chosen and appointed me to do a specific work. It still lay ahead of me at that time, but the groundwork of that appointment was set in place.

God Who Sees

Her labored breathing nearly choked her as she fled from camp. How could her mistress be so cruel? She couldn't take it anymore.

How could God forget her like this? Had she not been an obedient servant to both her master and her mistress? How was it her fault that she carried her master's child when her mistress was unable to do so? She hadn't chosen this! It was thrust upon her. They planned this, and then blamed her because it was so.

The desert was hot—so hot! Where *was* that spring? Her tongue swelled with the longing for water. Gritty sand clung to her feet as the sandals slapped them and her robe stuck to her uncomfortably. Her neck steamed under her wet hair. She wiped a hand across it.

Why had she not planned her escape? She'd run out of crazed fear and anger.

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“God! Protect my babe! Where *are* you?”

Suddenly the spring and small scrub trees appeared in front of her. She fell to her knees and with both hands scooped water all over herself in her desperation to drink.

Finally satisfied, she sat back, quietly taking stock of her situation: alone—in the desert—with no food or provisions and pregnant. How could she be so stupid? Where was God?

“Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?”

Hagar started and looked around. “I am fleeing the presence of my mistress,” she admitted, knowing full well who called her.

“Return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand.”

God continued to talk to Hagar that day. He told her about the son she carried in her womb and that she would have a multitude of descendents. He assured her that He had heard her affliction.

God gave Hagar a vision far greater than the circumstances under which she suffered.

She called that place, Beer Lahai Roi. It means, “Well of the One who lives and sees me.”¹

In spite of all the commotion and controversy that surrounded Hagar, it seems she felt invisible. She wondered if God saw her. Did anybody really *see* her or was she just a necessary component to making someone else’s life work?

Hagar went back to the mistreatment of her mistress because she had encountered God’s love for her. He gave her a future then told her to go and serve. She trusted in His love and intervention in her life to care for her and her child as she served a spiteful mistress. She chose to abide in God’s love.

I can understand Hagar’s feelings of invisibility and the desperation that sent her fleeing. My scrub tree was often my car on a hill at night where the stars in the dark sky represented God’s face to me.

This is where I cried out, “Where are you, God? Don’t you see what’s happening here? Do you see me at all?”

Oswald Chambers has proven to be a great friend to me through his insights in *My Utmost for His Highest*. He wrote that, “Song birds are taught to sing in the dark, and we are put into the shadow of God’s hand until we learn to hear Him.”²

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After a storm of anguish passed while I sat in my dark car, I watched the stars shimmer. If there were no darkness, those beautiful lights could not be seen. The hand of God put them there. I gazed for a long time in the quiet as my soul was stilled.

So, was this the shadow of God's hand?

I began to understand that my God lives and reigns and all my enemies really are under His feet. He is the victor, no matter what I experience right now. He is still the Vine and I am a branch and my life comes from Him.

He assured me He saw my struggles and heard my cries. He saw the suffering, the sacrifice, and there would be more in years to come, but I should not be afraid.

Something sweet happens in an intimate darkness with God. We can sit quietly and listen for His voice. When it comes, it fills the soul with peace and we learn to be steadfast whatever course of events rules our lives.

Abide with Me. Walk with Me in purity of spirit and willingness of heart and I will take you far. The waters are deep, but the treasures are there. I will be with you. Walk this path I have set before you. Don't veer to the right or the left. I am with you. I am your loving Father.

After the struggle, I knew He saw me. He had a plan, a greater purpose for me even though I could not understand it then. He sent me back into the fray just as He did with Hagar. My obedience was to trust His love and intervention for me and my children just like Hagar. I, too, was learning how to abide in God's love.

A caretaker often blends into the background, not seen or heard, just a necessary component to making someone else's life work.

But ... God sees. He *always* sees His beloved. Especially in the darkness.

Fruit in Abiding

As we continue to wait for God and obey Him, we find great joy in pleasing Him and seeing what He will do in our lives. Jesus told us the fruit of our obedience would be lasting.

Imagine a hot summer day and biting into a juicy, luscious peach. The sweetness permeates your mouth as your eyes close in ecstasy, and

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juice trickles down your chin and hands. Oh, what a heavenly blessing that is!

What did we do to deserve that wonderful peach? Nothing. It was a gift. It was chosen for us to enjoy. It was given in pleasure, for pleasure. What were we required to do to merit that peach? All we needed to do was to accept the gift and share the delight in it. Sometimes that is what bearing fruit in obedience means. It is a simple trust that the giver will give good things and we are to share them. We can believe it. Jesus said that we are His disciples as we bear fruit, and His Father is glorified.

What a different picture from the constant striving to do right. We must achieve. We must do. We must have something to show for our efforts or we think that God cannot see the work we have done and we are invisible.

God wants us to succeed. Just as we are cheerleaders for our own children, our Father in heaven is our chief cheerleader. His heart is constantly reaching out for us. Our obedience is more than just a doing of things.

Isaiah 32:15-20 gives an illustration of the blessings that the Spirit of God pours out upon the children of obedience. A progression begins in a desert. God pours His Spirit out and the desert becomes a fertile field, then a forest, where the righteous can dwell. The fruit of living rightly is peace and the effect of that is quietness and confidence forever. Blessing follows.

The wilderness of our hearts becomes a fruitful field, even a forest. As we learn of God and what He expects of us, our love for Him increases and spreads to those around us. As we keep our consciences clean before God, the effect of this, even in the midst of trying circumstances, is peace of mind. Through that peace comes quietness and trust because God dwells with us as we look to Him. *Forever.*

He says, "My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, though hail comes down on the forest and the city is brought low in humiliation. Blessed are you ..."
(Is. 32:18)

Do you see the assurances? Even if hail comes down and we are leveled with the problems we face, we can still have peace of mind and trust that He will be with us to work for us. This is blessing indeed.

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Garden Love

Obedience is in loving and longing to please the beloved. “Not My will, but Thine.” This was the cry of Jesus in the garden after terrible agonies and wrestling; agonies and wrestling that we cannot possibly understand as worlds clashed and Jesus wept and sweat blood.

Abba! Daddy!

How His Father’s heart must have wrenched when He heard that cry and could not save His beloved Son from what was coming.

Out of love—Father and Son—*gave each other up!*

Out of love for us, the ones they created together.

Jesus was obedient—*out of love*—and in the greater purpose, He opened up eternity for us!

Imagine!

When this began to glimmer in my mind, I knew that my choice would be to obey my Heavenly Father’s will *out of love* for the One who suffered most for me.

My obedience would not be perfect or even pretty at times, but only possible through His grace. Maybe the far reaching effect in my life would go beyond this world and into eternity as well.

Faith Walking

As experience taught me more about abiding in God’s love and then making decisions to obey Him, I learned that it must come by faith.

Through faith I could trust that God would come through for me even if I didn’t have the right emotions in place. The Bible says that without faith, it is impossible to please God. We have seen that He is in love with us. He is *for* us. He wants us to succeed in this faith walk because He wants us to have His very best. We are His children.

Our obedience is to make that decision to exercise faith and trust that He will do what He says He will do for us.

This does not always make good common sense. Sometimes it goes directly against it. Oswald Chambers talks about trusting God in spite of our common sense. He asks, “Can you trust Jesus Christ where your common sense cannot trust Him?”³ Wow! Do you want to look like a fool to your family and friends? I don’t.

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I ask myself if I can walk in faith and trust God when it looks ridiculous and the circumstances look like a lie.

The observation I looked for again came from Chambers, "Faith is unutterable trust in God; trust which never dreams that He will not stand by us ... what is your faith up against now? The test will prove your faith or kill it ... the final thing is confidence in Jesus."⁴

I look at my life and think, "This is crazy! None of it makes any sense."

Is this a faith walk? Every step.

Will Jesus go with me? Every step.

Will it all happen as He wills? Yes. I have no idea when or how or what that means, but the answer is still yes.

Am I crazy? By the world's standards, yes. However, I choose by obedience to walk by faith. What will God do?

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

My faith is up against it totally. Is there any other way to live? No. There is no adventure greater than what God will take me through.

And, after obedience, what could be better than to have the hands of God personally perfect me, establish me, strengthen me, and settle me!

That is what God will do.