

# Finishing Well

Lesson #13

Fullness of God

March 29, 2023

1<sup>st</sup> command: John 15:4a Abide in Me, and I in you. The Law Of Fruitfulness

A graph of the frequency of use in Google Books published since 1800 shows that Abide is used roughly 3x less in our modern writings. Yet respected pastor Adrian Rogers considers abide to be the most important word in the Bible! One of the modern synonyms is "hang around,"

Note: John uses the term meno > 50x in his writings; 11x in John 15.

Abide = meno= #3306 > to remain in the same place or position over a period of time.

It means to reside, stay, live, lodge, tarry or dwell; permanent residence.

Continues in a fixed state or endures.

Three elements to abiding:

Connection           to dwell

Dependence           to wait for

Continuance           to remain, to continue, to endure

Key #1: Our abiding CONNECTION to God for salvation is a reciprocal relationship.

- At the moment of salvation, God's Holy Spirit comes to live in us.
- An abiding relationship is established. We abide in Him and He is in us.
- It is a constant relationship and not something we develop over time.
- Penalty of sin is removed. I will not face condemnation from God over sin. [Rom. 8:1]

Question: When the abiding connection is made, am I now mature? NO

I must learn to DEPEND on God, walk in obedience, submit to sanctification so the Holy Spirit can transform me into the image of Jesus Christ and I can bear much fruit.

Col. 2:6-7 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

The disciples had an abiding relationship as far as salvation is concerned.

Jesus immediately tells them they are to abide even though they already abide.

Context: Jesus is not telling them they need to abide more to be saved.

He just told them they are already clean. He is not telling them to keep abiding to stay saved.

This is not about salvation.

It is about spiritual maturity > bearing fruit > discipleship

Abide in Him for daily living, draw strength from Him for living a holy life so they will bear fruit. Abiding for daily living should grow over time.

Context is Key: Is the word "abide" being used with reference to salvation or daily living?

Consider: A new Christian will fully abide in Christ for salvation but at the same time not abide in terms of daily living because they are still immature in their faith and don't yet know how to walk in dependence on God.

Key#2: Abiding as it relates to DEPENDENCE for our daily living is a one-way relationship.

We depend on Him for strength, to live a holy life and bear fruit.

Truth: The New Will is a permanent gift and part of our new nature.

The Power "to do" is NOT a permanent gift.

The "doing" is received moment by moment from the Holy Spirit. ONLY by the power of the Holy Spirit can I live a holy life and manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

Key: It is possible to fully abide in Christ from a salvation standpoint while, at the very same time, NOT abide in Him for daily living. We can abide and not abide at the same time, depending on: Are we talking about salvation or our daily dependence on Christ.

Consider: God was abiding in me 100% as far as salvation is concerned.

As far as spiritual maturity is concerned, I was nowhere near 100% abiding in Him.

I drifted and wasn't always walking with Him. But God is faithful.

If I choose to walk in disobedience, I stop bearing fruit.

- A branch in the Vine that does not bear fruit, He takes away. [John 15:2]
- He begins lifting me up to pull me back, possibly disciplining me or chastening me.
- If I continue this path of disobedience, in His love for me, He may take me home early.

Key Concepts: You can be fruitless at times, but not for long. The Lord stops by and starts "lifting you up" out of whatever sin has soiled you and stopped your fruit bearing.

Then as you get back into production He continues until you grow even more!

WOW, what a delight to know we are so vital to God's plan He personally is working on us!

Through teaching, discipline and chastening, He's been teaching me to walk in obedience and to abide or remain [the CONTINUANCE connection] with Him.

Key #3: Our abiding CONTINUANCE: to remain, to continue, to endure

Daily abiding, like faith, is something believers grow into as they become spiritually mature.

Jesus is telling His disciples that they already abide for salvation but now need to learn how to abide for daily living, daily depending on Christ for strength, so that they can bear fruit.

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

- Genesesthe: Future Tense > Discipleship = Growing Experience
- As we continue to daily abide in the Vine, obedience and righteousness become our new normal and sin the exception.

Consider: God does not hurry in His development of our Christian life.

Darby: "It is God's way to set people aside after their first start, that self-confidence may die down. We must get to know ourselves and realize we have no strength."

Strong: A student asked his professor if he could take a shorter course than the one prescribed. Yes, but it depends on what you want to be.

- When God wants to make an oak, He takes ~100 years.
- When He wants to make a squash, He takes 6 months.

Goodman: It is not a present experience that ensures fruit unto maturity, but a patient continuance in well doing. To taste the grace of God is one thing: to be established in it and manifest it in character, habit and regular life, is another.

- Fruit ripens slowly: days of sunshine and days of storm each add their share.

Scroggie: Spiritual growth is a gradual process. Any experience which makes us more aware of our need of God must contribute to spiritual progress.

Austin-Sparks: The Lord enlarges us to possess more. He puts us through some exercise through some experience that means our spiritual expansion and exercise of spirituality, so we occupy the larger place spontaneously. [Key Growth Principle]

Ex. 23:29-30 I will not drive them out from before thee in one year: lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee until thou be increased.

Chuck Smith: Looking at the whole area of my life—so much to be done to bring me into image of Christ, I don't know where to start. I would like instant maturity.

- God will give me victory over the flesh little by little.

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: [It will take that long!]

"One day in the House of Commons, British Prime Minister Disraeli made a brilliant speech on the spur of the moment. A friend said, 'I must tell you how much I enjoyed your extemporaneous talk. It's been on my mind all day.'

Disraeli confessed: 'that extemporaneous talk has been on my mind for 20 years.'"

Consider: A list was compiled of greater than 30 men whom God used for His glory.

The average for these was 15 years after they entered their life work before they began to know the Lord Jesus as their Life and ceased trying to work for Him and began allowing Him to be their All in all and do His work through them.

This should encourage us to keep our eyes on eternity, by faith "apprehending that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus...pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. [Phil. 3:12b, 14]

Put your hand to the plow and irrevocably set your heart on His goal for us:

that we "may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." [Phil. 3:10]

Andrew Murray "Abide in Christ: so will you bear much fruit. Not a vine is planted but the owner thinks of the fruit, and the fruit only. Other trees may be planted for ornament, for the shade, for the wood—the vine only for the fruit. Of each vine the husbandman is continually asking how it can bring forth more fruit, much fruit. Believer!

Abide in Christ in times of affliction, and you shall bring forth more fruit. The deeper experience of Christ's tenderness and the Father's love will urge you to live to His glory."

Heb. 6:1 Therefore, having left [once and for all] the elementary principles of the teaching of Christ, LET US go on to perfection. [maturity; 5th Let us statement]

➤ He is emphatic: There is a peril in not progressing!

Consider: Believers who rebel against God and will not submit to sanctification will miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today and will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Joshua 18:3 How long will you put off [neglect] entering to take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?

Press on = #5342 = phero = be borne along like a ship by the wind

The use of the passive voice:

- Emphasizes the exertion of power on the individual from an outside source.
- Conveys the thought of the need of the recipient to willingly surrender to this outside influence

The present tense emphasizes the continual need for this activity.

- The writer lumps himself in this group needing to be continually borne along.
- The idea is "Let us be carried along by God's Spirit."
- Let us be carried forward to maturity.
- God enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word and act on it.

Submit to the Holy Spirit whose transforming power will complete the work in you.

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; [Promise> Reckon> Surrender>Thank Him]

Col 1:27-29 to whom God willed to make known what the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles is, the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

<sup>28</sup> We proclaim Him, admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, so that we may present every person complete in Christ.

<sup>29</sup> For this purpose I also labor, striving according to His power which works mightily within me.

### *The Spirit-Filled Life: For Empowerment; for Enablement*

1. We have eternal life through Jesus Christ the Son.
2. We have Abundant Life through the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. It is God's purpose that EVERY BELIEVER should live a life of deep, maturing and growing spirituality.
4. The Holy Spirit lives within us to accomplish this in 3 ways:
  - a. He reveals through the Word the fullness available in the glorified Christ.
  - b. He creates in our heart a desire for His fullness.
  - c. He acts as the channel for its transmission from Him to us.

Truth: The fullness of life in Christ indicates continuing advancement in our relationship with the Holy Spirit. The highest point the believer can reach in relationship to the Holy Spirit is found the command in Eph. 5:18 - BE FILLED (Continuously) WITH THE SPIRIT.

This is every Christian's need, command, prerogative and responsibility.

In Eph. 3, Paul writes a lengthy prayer. Then makes a series of requests which climax with...

Eph. 3:19b that you might be filled with all the fullness of God WOW.

The fullness of God is the totality of everything God is: His attributes, His character, His perfection, His holiness, His power, His love,... The fullness of God is His complete nature.

Key: Being filled to all the fullness of God is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Key: God indwells believers and they become a "partaker of divine nature."

II Pet. 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Key: The riches of God are available to us. God by His grace fills us with His Holy Spirit which enables us to live more like Christ, in whom the fullness dwells. [Eph. 5:18-20]

Col. 1:19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, Jesus Christ.

Col. 2:9-10 For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Eph. 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

I can imagine this for Paul who was caught up into the third heaven and shown great mysteries He suffered for Christ. He was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked. He authored 1/3 of the books of the New Testament. He was a spiritual giant. But me?

I can imagine it for Moses who was put into the cleft of the rock and God passed by.

His face literally glowed after he came out of the presence of God. Moses, filled with all the fullness of God, no problem. But me?

I can imagine it for Elijah who prayed, and it didn't rain for 3½ years.

He called fire down from heaven. He went to heaven in a whirlwind in chariots of fire. But me?

I can see it for Peter. They used to line people up on the street so that Peter's shadow healed them. He chose to be crucified upside down.

But what about me? I have so many weaknesses and failings. I sometimes get discouraged.

➤ Can I be filled with all the fullness of God?

Jesus said: John 4:14 "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

A never-ending source of life and satisfaction and spiritual abundance.

This fountain of Living Water is the fullness of God within the believer.

Key: If it is in God's Word, it is for you and for me. This wasn't written for someone else.

## Paul's Prayer: Get Your Hands On Your Wealth

Eph. 3:14-19 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— <sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul's prayer emphasizes enablement > realize how vast your wealth is and by faith use it. Each of the 4 petitions leads into the next one. He prays our inner man might have spiritual strength which will lead to a deeper experience with Christ which will enable us to apprehend [get hold of] God's great love which will result in our being "filled unto all the fullness of God."

### I. Spiritual Strength

Result of the continual strengthening of the Holy Spirit in our inner man

1. The PRESENCE of the Holy Spirit in my life is evidence of my justification.
2. The Holy Spirit's POWER enables me to live and walk as a Christian.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;

Truth: The Holy Spirit is MY ONLY RESOURCE to live the Christian life.

Wiersbe: Christ lives out His life through us by the power of the Spirit, who lives within our bodies. It is not by means of imitation that we abide in Christ and walk as He walked. No, it is through incarnation: through His Spirit, "Christ liveth in me."

Note: There are 59 references to the Holy Spirit in Acts.

He was crucial in the life of the early church.

"If God took the Holy Spirit out of this world, most of what we Christians are doing would go right on - and nobody would know the difference!"

3. His power is given to us "according to the riches of His glory." Jesus Christ returned to glory and sent the Spirit from heaven to indwell and EMPOWER His people.

➤ It is not necessary for us to beg or "work something up." The power is sent down.

4. This power is for our "inner man," the spiritual part where God dwells and works.

➤ Scripture tells us our inner man can see, hear, taste, feel, must be exercised, cleansed and fed. The inner man can be renewed spiritually in spite of outward physical decay day by day.

[II Cor. 4:16-18]. It is this inner power that causes us to succeed.

Key: Don't strive to produce fruit! Strive to abide closer to Christ.

Then fruit will come naturally, allowing Him to work through you to bear fruit.

5. The Holy Spirit empowers my inner man. My spiritual faculties are controlled by God.

- When I yield to the Spirit and let Him control my inner man, I succeed in living to the glory of God.
- I feed my inner man the Word of God, pray worship God, confess and keep my vessel clean and loving obedience.

## II. Depth

1. Paul used 3 verbs to convey the idea of spiritual depth. [dwell, rooted, grounded]

a. Dwell - Settle down and feel at home - Paul yearned for Christ to settle down and feel at home in their hearts - not a surface, but an ever-deepening fellowship.

K. Wuest: The abiding of Christ in the Christian is His permanent residence in Him and His supplying that Christian with the necessary spiritual energy to produce fruit in his life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Study the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament.

- It was the intention and the heart of God that He would dwell in the midst of His people. When they dedicated the tabernacle and temple to God, the presence of God came and dwelt above the mercy seat.

The ultimate purpose of God is to dwell with men.

Rev. 21:3 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people."

C. S. Lewis *The Screwtape Letters*: In this fictional book, an elder demon is writing to his young nephew, attempting to explain God's grand plan for humankind:

"One must face the fact that all the talk about His [God's] love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really *does* want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His" [HarperCollins Pub., 1996, p. 38].

Andrew Murray: "Who would, after seeking the King's palace, be content to stand in the door, when he is invited in to dwell in the King's presence, and share with Him in all the glory of His royal life? Let us enter in and abide and enjoy to the full all the rich supply His wondrous love hath prepared for us!"

b. Rooted - Tree roots must go deep into the soil for nourishment and stability.

Jer. 17:5-8 "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. <sup>6</sup> For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land *which* is not inhabited.

<sup>7</sup> "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.

<sup>8</sup> For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.

Ps. 1:1-3 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

<sup>3</sup> And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Truth: If there is to be power in my life, there must be depth and the roots must go deeper and deeper into the love of Christ.

c. Grounded, an architectural term, refers to the foundation.

If you don't go deep, you can't go high. The trials of life test the depth of our experience.

The storms that blow through reveal the strength of our roots.

### III. Apprehend

1. Comprehend = mentally grasping something; Apprehend = laying hold of it for yourself

Consider: It is possible to understand something but not make it your own.

2. We need to lay hold of the vast expanses of the love of God.

Truth: I NEVER have to worry about having inadequate spiritual resources to meet the demands of life. Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

### IV. Fullness

1. God wants me to experience His fullness.

Consider: It is tragic when we use the wrong measurements in examining our own spiritual lives.

We measure ourselves by a weaker Christian.

Paul says the measure is Christ and we cannot boast about anything. [Eph. 4:11-16]

2. The means of my fullness is the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

Truth: Positionally, I am complete in Him and all resources are there, but experientially, I enjoy only the grace I apprehend by faith.

Question: Have you been cut off from your source of power? Unbelief, unconfessed sin, not watching, worldly attitudes - these can ROB us of the POWER of the Holy Spirit.

Truth: A Christian robbed of power cannot be used of God.

John 15:5 Without Me, you can do nothing.

Eph. 3:20-21 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Andrew Murray: To be filled with the fullness of God simply means the dethronement of self and the enthronement of Christ. "Water always fills the lowest places first. The lower and emptier a man bows before God, the quicker and fuller the inflow of God's glory will be."

Jim Elliot: "God forgive me for being so ordinary, while claiming to know such an extraordinary God."