

Not How Far We Travelled, but How Faithfully We Remained

A Reflection on Abiding in Christ

Article Prayer, Repentance and the Spiritual Life From the Editor's Desk

John 15:4-5

There is a peculiar restlessness that marks our age. We move faster than any generation before us. We travel farther, communicate instantly, consume information endlessly, and yet somehow find ourselves perpetually behind. Our calendars are full, our minds are crowded, and our attention is fragmented into hundreds of competing demands. We have mastered the art of moving, but we seem to be losing the art of staying.

Perhaps that is why Jesus's words in the Gospel of John feel so startlingly countercultural: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Not achieve. Not accumulate. Not impress. Not perform. Abide.

The word itself sounds almost foreign in a culture obsessed with motion. It carries the quiet weight of permanence, patience, and presence. It speaks of remaining when everything around us encourages departure; of rootedness in a world addicted to novelty. Yet the more one reflects upon it, the more it becomes clear that abiding is not merely one aspect of the Christian life. It is the Christian life.

The first pages of Scripture reveal humanity walking with God in the cool of the day. The final pages depict a restored creation where God dwells with His people forever. Between Genesis and Revelation runs a single thread: God's desire for communion with humanity. The tragedy of sin was not merely that humanity broke a rule; it severed a relationship. The miracle of redemption is not merely that sins are forgiven; it restores fellowship. Christ came not simply to rescue us from something, but to bring us back to Someone. Abiding, therefore, is the restoration of our original design.

We often imagine spiritual maturity as the accumulation of knowledge, experience, influence, or achievement. Yet the greatest saints of history testify to a different reality: their lives were marked not primarily by extraordinary accomplishments, but by extraordinary attachment to Christ. The branch does not strive to manufacture fruit. It remains connected to the vine, and fruit is the consequence of that connection.

This simple truth challenges much of modern Christianity. We often evaluate ourselves by activity rather than intimacy. We celebrate visibility more than faithfulness. We admire productivity while neglecting

communion. Yet Jesus never said, "Without Me you can do less." He said, without Him we can do nothing — not little, but nothing. The statement is both humbling and liberating: humbling, because it dismantles the illusion of self-sufficiency; liberating, because it reminds us that the burden of sustaining our spiritual lives does not, in the end, rest on our own strength. The life flows from the Vine.

Abiding is not passive resignation. It is active dependence. It is opening the Scriptures not merely to gain information, but to encounter the living Word. It is praying not merely to present requests, but to cultivate a relationship. It is obeying not merely out of duty, but out of love. It is learning to recognise Christ not only in moments of worship, but in the ordinary moments too — in conversations, decisions, disappointments, acts of service, and seasons of waiting.

Indeed, waiting may be one of the purest expressions of abiding. We live in an age that rewards immediacy; God, however, often works through process. A seed becomes a tree slowly. Fruit ripens gradually. Character is formed patiently. Spiritual depth cannot be downloaded, accelerated, or outsourced. The Kingdom of God grows quietly.

Perhaps that is why abiding feels difficult. It requires us to trust God's pace when we prefer our own; it asks us to value formation over speed, faithfulness over visibility, and depth over applause. Yet those who learn this secret discover something remarkable: abiding transforms not only our relationship with Christ, but our relationship with everything else. Success no longer defines us. Failure no longer destroys us. Recognition no longer controls us. Uncertainty no longer paralyses us. We become anchored by a Presence greater than our circumstances.

The world measures a life by the accomplishments it has gathered before departure. Christ measures a life by the connection it has maintained while remaining. The question before every believer, therefore, is not merely, "What am I doing for Jesus?" but "Am I remaining in Jesus?" One question concerns activity; the other concerns identity. One produces exhaustion; the other produces fruit.

May this be a reminder of a truth both simple and profound: before we are teachers, leaders, writers, musicians, professionals, parents, or servants, we are branches. Our calling is not first to shine, but to stay — to stay connected to the Vine, rooted in His Word, anchored in His love, and faithful in every season.

In a world constantly urging us to move on, Jesus still whispers the invitation that changes everything: "Abide in me." And perhaps the greatest achievement of a Christian life is not how far we have travelled, how much we have accomplished, or how loudly we have been heard, but how faithfully we have remained.