

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, . . .” (John 15:7).

Praying and Abiding in Christ

by J. Wayne Kilpatrick

IT is a pure waste of time for one to pray if he is not abiding in Christ and Christ's Word is not abiding in him. Jesus said, “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). It just may be that many mysteries concerning prayer exist but the secret of prayer is found in these words of our Lord. Jesus is speaking of a prayer that has unbounded power. He says, “. . . ask *what ye will*, and it shall be done unto you.” (Italics mine.) Pre-ailing prayer, according to this verse, necessitates two conditions abiding in Him, and His Word abiding in us. Meditate upon these two requirements.

I. “YOU MUST ABIDE IN ME”

First, notice the meaning of the word “abide.” It is from the Greek word *meno*. It means to remain, continue, dwell, or stay put.

Every saved person is in Christ. Paul said, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). He said, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1). He said, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

(Romans 8:1). Paul uses this expression some seventy times to describe a Christian's position.

How does one get into Christ? Paul wrote, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3, 4). He also said, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26, 27).

Let us go back to the context of John 15. Notice verses 1 through 6:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in Him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

From this passage we learn several truths about “abiding in Christ.” As the branch has no

independent life of its own, neither do we. We must give up trying to think our thoughts, form our resolutions or cultivate our feelings, and simply and constantly look to Christ to think His thoughts in us, to form His purposes in us, to feel His emotions and affections in us. We are to renounce all of life independent of Christ, and constantly look to Him for the inflow of His life into us, and the outworking of His life through us.

It is possible for one to get into Christ like the branch gets to be a part of the vine and then because of unfruitfulness, to be cut off, cast forth, and burned. You may become a Christian and then fall away from God. Many passages declare this truth:

My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back; let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19, 20).

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4).

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron (1 Timothy 4:1, 2)

If this occurs, you cannot expect God to answer your prayers in your backslidden condition.

You ask, "How can I know if I have backslidden?" Here are some indications of a backslidden heart:

When you become content with your spiritual growth as it is, you may be backslidden. Peter said, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). He also said, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). The Hebrew writer declared, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12). Do you really hunger for the things of God? Remember Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). The Psalm-

ist said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:1, 2). Do you enjoy studying the Bible and praying? Do you enjoy church services?

When you come to worship but do not worship, you may be backslidden. We do not bring our Bibles with us; we do not sing; we pay no attention to the prayers, except possibly their length; we sleep during the sermon; we give out of habit or grudgingly; we partake of the Lord's Supper without discerning the Lord's body and blood. We are just clock-watchers who are eager to get it over with and get back to something a lot more enjoyable!

When you are more concerned with money and the things money can do than with the things of God, you are backslidden. Nothing is wrong with having money, even lots of it. But we must never fall in love with it (1 Timothy 6:10). When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, it did not matter that he was rich, famous, and the President of the U. S. The only thing that mattered was his relationship with God. Do not trade your relationship with God for all the money in the world.

What about a backslidden heart and Christian living? When we are ashamed of Jesus in the presence of sinners (Mark 8:38); when we grow weary in well-doing (Galatians 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58); when we worry instead of committing our way unto the Lord in a prayerful way (Matthew 6:25-34); when we do not show the spiritual concern over our own souls that others are showing in it; when we do not care to be with spiritual people; when we are afraid that gospel preaching is going to "drive people away"; when we do not like preaching that unsettles us by convicting our consciences; when we want the church to be more social and less spiritual in its programs; when someone becomes distasteful in our eyes because of his or her spirituality; when we do not fear our temptations; when we see "little" sins cropping out without being alarmed; when it is easier to see the shortcomings in others rather than in ourselves; when it takes much preaching to get us to do something for Jesus; when we preach or teach without seeking God's help; when we are not desperately concerned over the unsaved condition of our

neighbors and friends and are not trying to win them to Jesus; when we do not have a vision of what we can do for Jesus; when it is easier to find an excuse for not doing what we should do; we are backslidden.

II. "MY WORD MUST ABIDE IN YOU"

This is the second condition that must be met if our prayers are to be answered. We must study His Words, fairly devour His Words, let them sink into our thoughts and hearts. We must also obey them constantly in our lives, letting them shape and mold our daily lives and our every act.

It is through His Words that Jesus imparts Himself to us. The words He speaks unto us, they are Spirit and they are life (John 6:33). It is vain to expect answers to prayer unless we meditate upon the words of Christ, and let them find a permanent abode in our hearts.

Many wonder why they are so powerless in prayer, but the very simple explanation of it all

is found in their neglect of the words of Christ. They have not hidden His words in their heart. They do not abide in them.

Mere intellectual study of the Word of God is not enough. Meditation upon it must take place. The Word of God must be rolled over and over in the mind, with a constant looking to God to make that Word a living reality in the heart. The prayer that is born of meditation upon the Word of God is the prayer that soars upward to God's listening ear.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is the Christian's prayer book. If we are abiding in Christ through His Word abiding in us, we will have no love but His love, no joy but His joy, no peace but His peace, no desire but His desire, no petition but His petition, no fruit but His fruit. Failure to abide in Him is one reason why prayers are not answered. God will never fail to keep His promise, but we must meet the condition.

©Copyright, 1986, 2005 by Truth for Today
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED