

baby's mouth. We have a special medicine for this, as it is very common among the Zulu babies, but about two weeks later she came back and this time the grandmother and great-grandmother of the baby also came. They said that the medicine had not helped and would I please give them another kind. I had a second remedy on hand, so gave it to them, telling them if it did not help, they should take it to a doctor.

Well, today when I saw the young woman I asked at once about the baby. She said, "Oh, Nkosikazi, my baby is dead." I was so shocked, so asked her to tell me about it. She said the last medicine that I gave her helped the baby greatly so that in four days its mouth was well and they were so happy about it but shortly after that it caught cold and from her description I think it had pneumonia. She said: "Oh, my arms are so empty. My first baby died, and I was so happy when the second one came and now it's gone, and I'm all alone." She is a Christian, in one of the native churches. I tried to comfort her as best I could and she said that she felt sure that her babies were safe with Jesus, for they had known no sin. Poor little mothers, my heart aches for them all tonight, and I pray that God will comfort their sad hearts.

May the Lord bless you all, in the homeland is our daily prayer.

Yours in His glad service,

GLADYS KIERSTEAD

#### ABIDING IN CHRIST

Rev. Paul S. Rees, D.D.

"Abide in me, and I in you"—John 15:4.

It is part of the genius of our Lord as a teacher that with marvelous skill he takes the ordinary things of every day and clothes them with a spiritual significance never known before. The thing he seizes upon here as the common symbol of great spiritual truth is a vine and its branches. A vine reaches out and projects itself in and through the branches. The branch reaches in and lays hold upon the vine. So that there is formed a union in which it is impossible, as a matter of fact, to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. It is an organic union. Jesus furthermore says that this relationship, so vital, so organic, is a symbol of a spiritual relationship. "Just as the branch is a vital part of the vine, so you are to become spiritually united to me, and in that fellowship you are to abide." I could not say, in the face of what the Master says, that there is no possibility of breaking the union. He says, "If a branch abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." But properly, this is to be a permanent union. We are to see to it at all costs that nothing severs us from him as the living vine.

1. I want you to notice, first, the character of this abiding. It is personal, a personal relationship designed to be a permanent relationship. There are two phrases in the text, "abide in me" and "I in you." Do you see that mutual personal relationship? That's getting pretty well mixed up, isn't it? And yet he says it. It isn't something that you and I presumptuously say on our own authority. O, what an exalted privilege this is!

A personal relation—some one says, "How do you explain that?" I don't explain it. I don't even try to explain it, for the reason that it can't be explained. It defies explanation. In every Christian experience, whether we

are conscious of it or not, there is an element of mysticism. And yet it's not exactly the mysticism of those generally known as mystics. Theirs was a mysticism in isolation. The true Christian mysticism is to be a mysticism in insulation, not withdrawing from the world, but serving in the midst of it. Mysticism is simply the affirmation that there is a God consciousness that transcends sense impressions. You can have that and not go off in a monastery or live by yourself in the woods somewhere. You can have that and serve God right here in the world. Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." You can be joined to Jesus Christ and yet be spiritually detached from the world. There are institutional Christians—joined to the church but not to Christ. There are creedal Christians—joined to a creed but not holding to Christ. There are legal Christians—joined to the law and trying to fulfill righteousness, but not joined to Christ. Do you remember how we used to tie oranges on the Christmas tree? That was a wonderful experience of our childhood days, but there's just as much difference between a man who's merely joined to church and a man who is truly united to Christ.

The character of this abiding is not only personal, but also affectional. Since it's personal, it can be affectional. "Continue ye in my love." The word "continue" has the same force as the word "abide." To abide in Jesus is to abide in a personal atmosphere that is marked by the constancy and dependability of his own love. If you'll stay put you'll never lack in divine love. Whether anyone else cares or loves you or not, he says, "I'll care. I'll love. I'll bestow my affection. Continue ye in my love."

The high priestly prayer further shows the character of this love. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." They're to have the same kind of love that the Father has for Jesus. God loves everybody. But God doesn't love everybody alike. He loves sinners with the love of pity, but his redeemed and holy people with the love of pleasure. He loves sinners compassionately, but he loves his own with a love that gives him pleasure. He says, "I take delight in that man, in that woman. Continue ye in my love." You really have the whole Trinity coming to take it abode in your little sanctified heart. You can abide there all nestled and tucked in with Jesus. I can't explain it, but you can experience it.

A big, brawny blacksmith was converted. In the meeting one night he stood up and gave the testimony, "I am in Christ and Christ is in me." There was a skeptic in the service that night. The next day he hunted up the blacksmith at his shop and said, "You didn't know I was in the audience last night, did you? I heard your testimony and it was the most foolish testimony I ever heard. How could you be in Christ and Christ be in you?" The blacksmith was heating a piece of iron white hot in the fire. He pulled it out, glowing with heat, and said to the skeptic, "I can't explain it, but I can ask you a question you can't explain either. How can the iron be in the fire and the fire be in the iron? But if you don't believe it, take hold of it." That was what I call a classical answer. You don't have to explain it, you can experience it. As to the character of the abiding it is both personal and affectional.

II. I want to call your attention now to two conditions of abiding. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." The first condition of abiding is faith. We are to have utter confidence in the finality of what Jesus said. He did not speak generally to entertain men. Always what he said was a bid for their confidence and faith. All that he says is absolutely and dependably true. Shall we take the promises of Jesus at face value? If we do, we have got a foundation that will never crumble. I want to make an appeal to you now: Count absolutely on the words of the Lord.

Take this for an example "Lo, I am with you always." David Livingstone took that and went to the heart of Africa with it. Years later, after his great work in Africa, he came home and was given the degree of LL.D. It was the custom of Glasgow for the upper classmen to heckle those who received honorary degrees. Livingstone came to the front with his drawn white face, his shoulders stooped, and one arm hanging almost useless. There was no heckling, but perfect silence. "My friends," he said, "would you have me tell you what it is that has sustained me all the time I was in Africa, during which time I have been among people who were always uncertain and often hostile? Shall I tell you what it was that always sustained me? It was this, 'Lo, I am with you always.'" And when Livingstone's Bible was examined, it was found that he had marked this margin by that passage, "There are the words of a gentleman, and a gentleman can't lie." Jesus says, "Take my words. Rest upon them. Build upon them. You're secure."

A second condition of abiding is obedience. "If ye keep my commandments." The first condition is faith and the second obedience, and the two go hand in hand. There must be maintained a heart attitude of perfect obedience. If you expect to keep the blessing of God on your soul, you cannot compromise on points of duty and the revealed will of God.

I once heard Chaplain Hogg, who was a chaplain in the World War. When he landed in Brest and was in receipt of orders to proceed to the front, he was very anxious first to secure mail from home. He had not heard from home for a long time. The last boat came in. He received nothing and reluctantly proceeded to the front. He had hardly gotten there when an officer approached him and said, "Chaplain Hogg, there is some mail for you at headquarters." "How could that be?" the chaplain answered. "I waited until the last minute in Brest hoping to receive mail and none came." "Let me tell you something," the officer returned. "In the army, a man's mail goes where his orders go." If you want God's blessing, you will find that his blessing always goes in the order of obedience.

III. Now notice three consequences of abiding. The first is fruitfulness. You will be increasingly fruitful. Fruitage is the thing Jesus is much interested in. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Purging does not mean pruning. Purging means literally bleeding the vine. A delicate incision is made to let out what the vine dresser calls sour sap. I might comment on that, but will refrain. You should be progressively, increasingly fruitful. You will not only be kept, but you will be the means in God's hands of bringing others into the blessed relationship. Say, you

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