

96-06-28b

Okay, we're ready to resume and we've set the stage, we've kind of reviewed some of the context and the background of this. Now we're going to get down to brass tacks. What should we, when we leave here tonight and we've been looking at this first part of Romans chapter 8, and we ask ourselves, so what? What is the answer to that question? How should we then live? What difference does this make in a practical sense, having seen these things in Romans? Well, the key to this, as the key is in so many cases, is in Jesus Christ.

And this phrase, in Christ, is the key to the practical outworking of this in our lives. We saw this phrase in verse 1 and verse 2, so we want to pause and take a look at this. This will not be an exhaustive study, we just have about 8 points on the phrase, in Christ.

And surprisingly, we tend to think in Christ is a positional truth, it happens in salvation, and it's pretty much a given for believers. But I think you'll find it interesting what Scripture has to say about this. First of all, let's affirm that that is in fact the case.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are in Christ. It is a truth that becomes real at the point of salvation. We have this in Galatians chapter 3, verse 26.

And we'll flip over and read verses 26-29 of Galatians 3. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. And this is an affirmation of the fact that through faith in Christ, and this is saving faith, salvation faith, we are entered into union with Jesus Christ. And in God's eyes, we partake of Him permanently, eternally.

It's an unchangeable fact regardless of what we do after salvation. And that is a true fact. But there is also a practical side of this being in Christ.

And you can't mix the two. We make a mistake if we get these confused in our mind. Now let me ask you this.

If you are in Christ now, because we are all believers I'm assuming, it would be silly for me to give you a command to be in Christ, wouldn't it? If that happened at the point of salvation and we are all believers, then I can't say now, I want you to be in Christ, I want you to remain in Christ. It would be pointless because it's already an established fact. And yet we have this command in Scripture.

If you turn back to John chapter 15 verse 4, once we get here I think you'll find that this is a very

familiar passage. John chapter 15, Jesus is in the upper room talking to the disciples and He says, 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. Now once again, is this a call to salvation? Is Jesus Christ evangelizing the disciples in the upper room? He's not.

That you there is believers. And He says, you abide in Me. It's an imperative.

It's a command. So there's something beyond the positional truth of being in Christ that applies to our life as believers. And Jesus says, abide in Me.

If you don't abide in Me, you can't bear any fruit. And that, we have discovered, is one of the reasons that God leaves us here on the planet after salvation is to bear fruit. This chapter tells us about that.

In verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned. And a lot of folks have come to John 15 and said, well, this whole idea of burning, this has got to be the lake of fire.

These are unbelievers. They just looked like branches and they really weren't. They didn't bear any fruit because they weren't really saved.

That's not the case at all. This is talking about the fruit of the life. Believers are not being burned.

This is the judgment for discerning fruit. And this is an important thing for us to remember. Remember it says in Romans 8, 1, there is now no condemnation as far as sin goes.

We're not living to avoid the condemnation of sin. That's been taken care of. The judgment for us as believers now, what God is looking for us in our lives is fruit, is righteousness.

You say, well, okay, I'm a believer here and I want to have righteousness in my life. What's the key? How am I going to produce that? Well, here's the key. We have to abide in Christ.

And Scripture is going to tell us exactly how that is accomplished because it's more than positional truth. That's why it's a command. Jesus says, abide in Me and you will bear much fruit.

If you don't abide in Me, cast out as a branch and withered. And those branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and they are burned. And this reminds us of what we saw when we looked at the judgment seat of Christ several weeks ago.

When we were in Romans chapter 2. And there is a fire that takes place at the judgment seat of Christ, isn't there? Are believers burned in that fire? What is it that gets burned in the big wood, hay and stubble bonfire? Is it people or is it the fruit of the life? It's the fruit of the life. Now is that

wood, hay and stubble sin? It's not. Sin is not an issue.

There is no condemnation now. The bonfire is everything that's not righteousness. Everything that doesn't constitute fruit in God's plan.

What God is looking for from us is righteousness. And that bonfire is all of the things that we do that don't constitute righteousness. It's when we try to follow rules.

When we try to do things in our own energy. When we produce an outward show of righteousness that doesn't come from an inner transformation. It doesn't come from the power of God on the inside.

And we can be a withered branch. In God's eyes we're in the tree but we're not producing the fruit that He saved us to produce. And so that branch, the outcome of that life is snapped off and put in the fire and it's burned.

There's nothing left. And that can happen for believers. It will happen for believers at the judgment seat of Christ.

The big bonfire, the wood hay and stubble is burned. And many of us will be saved yet so as by fire. Because we have our eternal life in terms of living with God for eternity.

But our life after salvation didn't count for anything. No fruit. How can we have fruit? We have to abide in the vine.

And as we go through these passages on being in Christ, Scripture is going to tell us exactly how to get that done. Isn't it true that there's nothing more frustrating than being told that something needs to be a certain way but they never tell you how to get it done? They say, well you should, here's a height weight chart. And because you're this high, this is how much you should weigh.

Okay, great. Well, now what? You've told me how things ought to be. How do I get there? And when I was in Sunday school as a teenager, my Sunday school literature week after week was filled with you should be enjoying God.

You should be experiencing joy and peace. Believers love to study the Word of God and love to pray. And I thought, well, great.

How can I get to that place? Because I just don't feel that. I don't have that joy. I don't have that peace.

I see no difference between myself and my unbelieving schoolmates. I am a believer. I've been a believer for years.

How do I do that? And Sunday after Sunday, I'd go to Sunday school waiting for somebody to tell

me how. And they just kept telling me, what? This is what you should be. This is how you should feel, how you should operate.

And they never told me, here's the means. This is where the power comes from. Well, we're going to see that tonight.

How do we dwell in Christ? How do we abide in Christ? Well, this is one of the outcomes. We can't bear fruit. Our life isn't going to count in God's plan unless we do this.

So that generates the need in our mind, doesn't it? We need to figure out how to do this. Otherwise, our life is just going to go up in smoke at the judgment seat. And what's the point of living life if it's all for nothing in an eternal sense? So that's our first point.

We cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Christ. And that's John 15, really the whole chapter, but you can specify verse 4 there. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine.

And we can't bear fruit unless we abide in Christ. Now, the second point, we cannot serve as witnesses. There's a big push today that the mission of being a believer is to evangelize.

That we shall be witnesses unto me, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. That's the reason for being a believer is to witness. Well, you cannot be a witness unless you abide in Christ.

And this is found in John 17, verse 21. You just turn the page or two pages in the New King James here. This is in Jesus' great prayer to God the Father after the disciples have been instructed and so forth.

And in verse 17 of chapter 17, Jesus says, Sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. That they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you. That they also may be one in us, in order that what? In order that the world may believe that you sent me.

In order that the world may believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God sent by the Father, what is it that we are to do? We need to be one. We need to be in the Father and in the Son. We need to be in Christ.

That is the means whereby we bear witness to the world. Being in Christ. We cannot serve as witnesses in the world unless we are in Christ, John 17, verse 21.

Thirdly, in Christ, Scripture says, we are a new creation. Now let me ask you a question. Have you ever seen a believer, perhaps we have been a believer, that bore no resemblance to a new creation? We know that that is possible, isn't it? Many of us, there is no way you can apply the

Scripture that says, old things are passed away and all things have become new.

Many of us as believers and a lot of believers that we observe, nothing has become new, everything is as it was, and that doesn't seem to apply at all. Well now, why is that? Because that being in Christ isn't talking about positional truth, it's talking about this experiential abiding in Christ. We have this in 2 Corinthians 5.17. Let's take a quick look at that.

2 Corinthians 5.17. You'll notice that that verse begins with a word, therefore, and it refers back to the previous context there, talking about the love of Christ compelling us because He died for all, so that in verse 15, those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. We're talking about the Christian life here. Having been saved, we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again.

Therefore, in verse 17, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

All things come from God, in verse 18, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. And so, we know that we are a new creation in Christ, but for that to be a reality, we have to switch over from positional truth to experiential truth. We have to be abiding in Christ in an operational sense, not just a positional sense, before that new creation and all things becoming new becomes a reality.

So, that's our third point. In Christ, we are a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5.17. Fourthly, here's where we get to the heart of the matter.

How do we live in Christ as believers? We live in Christ by faith in the truth. This is Colossians 2, verses 6 and 7. Colossians 2, 6 and 7. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, notice that's a perfect. It happened in the past with results that continue up to the present.

You have received Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way that you have received Him, so walk in Him. Rooted and built up in Him. How can we be in Christ? How can we be rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith? As you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

He goes on to warn against false versions of the truth. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, traditions of men, basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. It's the truth of the Word of God that roots us and builds us up and establishes us in Christ.

The operational sense of being in Christ comes through the Word of God. Not through empty deceit, not through traditions of men. This is the big thing that Paul is battling in Rome.

It's a tradition of man to keep the law of Moses. And it's a false way of righteousness. It doesn't bear fruit in God's plan.

So he says don't let anyone cheat you. Don't let anyone hand you something that's not the truth of the Word of God because you won't be in Christ. It's in Christ that all the fullness dwells bodily.

You are complete in Him. In Him you were circumcised. He goes back and he says here's your positional truth.

In Him you have all of this potential. And so he says down in verse 16 of Colossians 2, Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink or a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath which are shadows of good things to come. The substance is of Christ.

These external rules, people that measure you by the law, measure you by where you go to church or whether you go to church or whether you do these different things that they have decided constitute a standard of righteousness, that's not the issue. The issue is abiding in Christ. Rooted, built up, and established in the faith as you have been taught.

So that's the key. And we are attempting to move in that direction tonight. We're taking time.

We're making it a point to take in the Word of God. This is an essential step. It's not the only step.

It's not sufficient in and of itself to simply hear the words of truth washing over our souls. But it's an essential step. You can't have faith if you don't have something to have faith in.

And the truth of the Word of God is the object of our faith. So we have to hear it and learn it before it's going to be in our soul to be the object of faith. So it's an essential step.

But if we stop at attending Bible class, we stop at hearing the truth, and it doesn't root us and establish us and build us up, then we've failed. And we can be legalistic about exposing ourselves to the truth of the Word of God. It takes more than attendance.

It takes more than hearing. It takes faith. Rooted, built up, and established in faith.

We have a way of knowing whether we're in Him or not. Scripture says there's a way that we can know whether or not we are accomplishing this objective. So that would be a handy thing to know, wouldn't it? The little magic decoder ring that glows when we're in Christ and goes dark when we're not.

Well, our fifth point, we may be sure that we are in Him by keeping His Word and seeing the love of God perfected. This is 1 John 2, verses 5 and 6. The epistles of John are a great place if you want to find where the most information is about being in Christ. It's right here in 1 John.

1 John 2, 5 and 6. And it's interesting also that it's first introduced in the gospel of John and it's culminated in the epistles of John. Whoever keeps His Word, this is 1 John 2, 5. Whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him. By this we know that we are in Him.

That the love of God is perfected. Now, what does that mean? What is the love of God like? Our love, human love, typically depends on the merits of the person that we love, right? We look at someone and we say, oh, they're sweet, they have this quality, they have that attribute, they have this appearance, they have that going for them. And we look at someone and human love is based on the attributes of the object of love.

God loved us when there was nothing worthy about us, right? While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us when we were His enemies. God loved us and sent His Son to die for us. God's love is based on who God is and what God is, not on any merit in the object.

So human love depends on the merit of the object. God's love depends on the merit of the subject. It's the quality of the lover that counts in the love of God, not the quality of the lovee.

So God's love depends on the quality of the subject, the one that is loving, not the qualities of the object of that love. So, if the love of God is being perfected in us, if we have learned to love the unlovely, if our love, if our loyalty, if our motivation to do good is based on who and what we are and not who and what the object is, that's when we know the love of God is coming to exist in our soul. Do we only bless those who bless us? Or are we able to love those who hate us and pray for those who spitefully use us? That's when the love of God is being perfected.

And if we don't see that quality in our lives, if we return evil for evil, if we, you know the scripture that says love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you, if we're not genuinely able to do that, then the love of God is not being perfected. And that should be a red flag waving in our soul. We are not in Him.

Because we know that we're in Him when we find the love of God in our soul. Romans 5.5 The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And if that's not there, we need to get back to figuring out how to be in Him.

Well, we've already seen that, haven't we? How do we abide in Christ? We take in the Word of God and we make it a priority and we think about it. We say, that's what God says, that's going to be my reality. I'm not going to act based on my experience.

I'm not going to act based on history. I'm not going to act based on what people do. God says this is the way life is.

This is the way reality is. So that's going to be my reality. We make that conscious decision and that's faith.

God's reality is more real than the reality of experience or of history or of what people think or what people say. And the essential step is taking in the Word of God as we're trying to do tonight. So this is what John tells us.

Whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. And by this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He Christ walked.

Jesus Christ didn't return evil for evil, did He? I think the most tremendous example of that is when He is on the cross and you've got all of these terribly evil, self-centered, spiteful, holier-than-thou, hypocritical, whitewashed, tombstone people huddled around the cross mocking and jeering, spitting on Christ, mocking Him. If you're the Son of God, deliver yourself and so forth. And what did Jesus do? He looked at those people and said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

And that is a high standard. I think it's probably the task of a lifetime to find the love of God and to perfect it to that extent. But that's our goal, and that's our example.

And Jesus Christ did that with the very same resources that we have. He had the Word of God and the Spirit of God and His humanity, and that's what we have. And it's possible for us to have that kind of love.

What a great goal that is to work toward, to be able to honestly look at someone who is spitefully abusing and misusing us and pray from the heart for them, to pray for those who spitefully use us like Christ did from the cross. That's when we know that the love of God is being perfected. And we can't just decide to do that.

We can do like Paul in chapter 7 and know that that's right and will to do that and wish for it, even praying for it, isn't going to bring about. We can't pray for love. Love of God comes into us when we keep His Word.

We've got to know His Word and we've got to say, that's my reality. That's going to be the basis for my life. So that's our fifth point.

We may be sure that we are in Him by keeping His Word and seeing the love of God perfected in us. 1 John 2, 5 and 6. We are in Him, our next point here, point 6, we are in Him, we are in Christ, if the Word abides in us. This is also in 1 John.

Chapter 2, verse 24. Just further on down in this same passage. John says, Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. We've got to do, and this has been true in every age. Think about Psalms.

The very beginning of the Psalms. Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, doesn't conform himself to the pattern of the world around him. He doesn't stand in the way of sinners.

He doesn't look just like and act just like all the sinners that are around him. He doesn't sit in the

seat of the scornful. He doesn't busy himself with looking at others and tearing them down to try to raise himself up.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in that law he meditates day and night. That was the one means of escape from that terrible situation under the law in the Old Testament. The law and the prophets bore witness to righteousness by faith.

David figured that out and a few others in the Old Testament like Abraham figured that out. Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

And this is the promise that he has promised us. Eternal life. Isn't it interesting that he puts that as the very next verse there in 1 John 2.25. Talking to a believer about abiding in Christ and he says, and this is the promise that he has promised us, eternal life.

That's life characterized by that which is eternal. It's not talking about duration, it's talking about quality. Life that partakes of the divine.

Life that partakes of God. We can have that now. We don't have to wait for the resurrection body and the millennial kingdom and the eternal future.

Our life can have that eternal quality now. That's God's promise. And this is how it comes.

We are in Him even if His Word abides in us. 1 John 2.24. And you also find that of course back in John 15 as well. Abiding in Christ is a command.

We saw that in John 15. You can also see it here in 1 John 2.28. And now little children abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. It is possible and I would say it is likely for believers that we will be ashamed when Jesus Christ returns.

And we shouldn't be. There's no need for us to be. If we don't want to be ashamed at the way we've lived our lives and the priorities that we've set and the goals that we have pursued, what do we need to do? Abide in Him.

And when He appears we can have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. So abiding in Christ is a command. Finally, we see Christ and we are in Him through faith.

This is knowing and applying the Word of God. And for this we turn back to the Gospel of John, John 14. Verses 15-21.

John 14. 15-21 If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him.

But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. And that's the situation now. Jesus was talking before the cross.

Now after the cross He is in us. He says in verse 18, I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you a little while longer and the world will see Me no more.

But you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. And at that day you will know that I am in My Father and you are in Me and I in you.

We will know that we are in Christ. And this is one of the ministries of God, the Holy Spirit. And this is conditioned back up on verse 15.

If you love Me, keep My commandments, keep My Word. And Jesus' Word was not a set of rules. Jesus was teaching us to live by principle, to live by faith.

To know the plan of God, the plan of His Father. So abiding in Christ is a command. We see Christ, we are in Him through faith.

Knowing and applying the Word of God. Look at verse 21. He who has My commandments and keeps them.

And this is to guard, to treasure, to think about, to consider valuable, to keep close to oneself. He it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

So this is the great opportunity that we have in this age. There is no condemnation for us in this age. We are not making the point of sin.

We are not a demonstration of the fact that human nature is corrupt and that it can't please God. That's already been done. God condemned sin in the flesh and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and we have a new and different opportunity.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What the law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, God did in sending His Son. And if you look back there in Romans chapter 8, what we're leading up to here is verse 4. In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Because we walk according to the Word of God and the Spirit of God, the righteous requirement of the law is met. And what is that righteous requirement? It's not just to avoid sin, but it's to produce righteousness, to bear fruit. That's the thing that could not be done by keeping the law, to bear fruit to righteousness.

If you were a very, very obedient, observant Jew, you might escape the condemnation of sin,

generally speaking. But it didn't produce the positive fruit of righteousness, the fruit that comes by faith, the fruit that is created by God in us as we abide. And that's the opportunity that we have in this age.

So it is a mistake for us to organize Christianity and to make the point of Christianity to be morality or the avoidance of sin or the stamping out of sin. What we need to be doing is concentrating on righteousness. And that is our goal.

The creation that God does in our soul will transform us and will lead us away from the unproductive. The big problem with sin in our lives is not so much that it brings condemnation on us, it's that as long as we're in sin, we can't be producing righteousness. Our condemnation in this age is according to the law of the Spirit.

Condemnation in this age is based on failing to produce righteousness, not producing sin. Sin has already been judged. We say, whoa, that's dangerous.

You're saying we have a license to sin. Not at all. We have a license to bear fruit.

And if we fail to bear that fruit, we fail the grace of God. We fail everything that Christ died for us to accomplish in this age, which is more than deliverance from the lake of fire. It is to be delivered out of this present evil age and to bear the fruit of righteousness.

It's a great opportunity. And if we fail that, the condemnation, the judgment that we will experience under the law of the Spirit, what we saw in Galatians 6, what we saw back in Romans chapter 2, is that at the judgment seat of Christ, the results of our life are going to all go up in smoke. And it's lack of righteousness for which we will be judged at the judgment seat.

God judged sin in the flesh in Jesus Christ once for all at the cross. And as we continue next time in Romans chapter 8, we're going to see that it's what's going on in our mind that counts. Are we carnally minded or spiritually minded? That's the issue that decides whether or not our life is bearing fruit.

But the key here is to take advantage of what we've seen tonight in Scripture for abiding in Christ. The power of God comes into the life of the believer through the Spirit of God and the Word of God. And as we continue through Romans chapter 8, we're going to develop more fully what Scripture has to say about the Word of God and the Spirit of God in our lives.

But for tonight we'll close in prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for this great age in which we live where the sin problem has been solved.

Sin has been condemned at the cross. It's been judged at the cross. The power of sin has been broken.

We are no longer slaves to sin. We don't have to concentrate the effort of our life on trying to

overcome sin and conquer sin. Jesus Christ has already done that.

And we thank You for the great privilege we have of being in a position in this age of bearing fruit, of abiding in our Savior Jesus Christ, of seeing the power of Your Word and Your Spirit bear fruit in our lives. We pray that this will be a source of motivation to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will convict us and motivate us and encourage us through the truth of these things and that as a result our lives will bear fruit and when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ there will be that fruit that pleases You and glorifies our Savior Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name. Amen.