

**A.B. Simpson:**

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (I John 2:28)

It would seem as though John meant that only little children could abide in Him; that only when we get to be little can we know the Lord in His fullness; only when we cease from our manly and womanly strength and become dependent can we know His strength and independence as our support and stay. John counted himself among the little children, because he says, "we" when he addresses us. He was indeed a little child in spirit from the time Boanerges died, and John laid his head on Jesus' breast to be strong no more in himself, and to be seen no more apart from the enfolding arms of Jesus.

We have seen Christ in His personal glory; we have seen what it is to be in Him and to have Him in us, and now we want to have these impressions stereotyped. John says, "Little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence."

Let us speak very particularly and plainly about how we may maintain this abiding. You have surrendered; you have given up your strength as well as your will; you have consented that henceforth He shall support your life. Like a true bride, you have given up your very person, your name, your independence, so that now He is to be your Lord. Your very life is merged in Him, and He becomes your Head and your All in All. Now, beloved, how is this to be maintained? He says we are to abide, and He will abide in some sense according to our abiding. "Abide in me, and I in you."

**Live By The Moment**

First, it must be a momentary life, not a current that flows on through its own momentum; but a succession of little acts and habits. You have Him for the moment, and you have Him perfectly; you are perfectly saved this moment; you are victorious this moment, and that which fills this moment is large enough to fill the next, so that if you shall renew this fellowship every moment, you shall always abide in Him. Have you learned this? The failures in your life mostly come through lost moments, broken stitches, little interstices, cleavages in the rock where the drops of water trickle down and become a torrent. But if you lost no steps and no victories, you shall abide in constant triumph.

First, then, learn this secret, that you are not sanctified for all time so that there will be no more need for grace and victory; but you have grace for this moment, and the next moment, and by the time life is spent, you shall have had a whole ocean of His grace. It may be a very little trickling stream at first; but let it flow through every moment, and it shall become a boundless ocean before its course is done.

**Definite Acts of Will**

Next, this abiding must be established by a succession of definite acts of will, and of real, fixed, steadfast trust in Christ. It does not come as a spontaneous and irresistible impulse that carries you whether you will or not, but you have to begin by an act of trust, and you must repeat it until it becomes a habit. It is very important to realize this.

A great many think, when they get a blessing, that it ought to sweep them on without further effort. It is not so. An act of will, an act of choice is the real helm of spiritual life. You were saved from sin by actually choosing Jesus as your Saviour; you were consecrated by definitely giving yourself and taking Him for everything.

So beloved, you must keep the helm fixed, and press on, moment by moment, still choosing to trust Christ and live by Him until at last it comes to be as natural as your breathing. It is like a man rescued from drowning; when they take him from the water, respiration seems to be stopped. And when it returns, it is not spontaneous, but a succession of labored pumpings; they breathe the air in and they breathe the air out, perhaps for half an hour; then an involuntary action is noticed, and nature comes and makes the act spontaneous; and soon the man is breathing without effort.

But it came by a definite effort at first, and by and by it became spontaneous. So with Christ: if you would have this abiding in Him become spontaneous, you must make it a spiritual habit. The prophet speaks of the mind "stayed on God," and David says, "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." We begin by determining, and we obey Him no matter what it costs; and by and by the habit is established.

**The Law of Habit**

Then comes the third principle: habit. Every habit grows out of a succession of little acts. No habit comes full-grown into your life; it grows like the roots of a tree, like the fibres of the flesh, as the morsels of food you swallow are absorbed into your life. You see a man going steadily along in a course of life, but that course of life was established by the habit of years. The stenographer at my side sits and takes down my words as fast as I can speak them. At first it was clumsy and slow work; but at length it became a habit, and now he does not have to stop and think how to make the characters; they come to him as naturally as the words come to my lips. So it is with writing: we remember how painfully at first we had to hold the pen, but we now dash off our signature, and it is always the same; our friends know it, our banker knows it; and it can be identified as ours. How did it come about? Because for years we have made the same marks. This is the reason, beloved, that it pays to plod; the habit becomes at length a necessity, and is easier as it grows.

It is so with evil; it is easier for a man to go down the longer he goes down, and it is easier for him to go up the longer he goes up. And so it is with looking to Jesus; it is like the movement of the eye--the lid moves instinctively and the Bible uses it as a figure of God's care. "Keep me as the apple of thine eye." Before the dust can hurt the eye, the little curtain falls over the tender ball. So we find ourselves in life instinctively holding our tongues when we would have felt like talking. So we can discern the very scent of evil before it comes and inarticulately breathe a prayer to heaven before the danger reaches us. Thus also will the habit of obedience be formed; it comes by doing steadily, persistently, and faithfully what the Lord would have you to do. He is putting you to school in these little trials, until He gets the habit confirmed, and obedience becomes easy and natural.

#### Self-Repression

Again, if we would abide in Christ we must continually study to have no confidence in self. Self-repression must be ever the prime necessity of divine fullness and efficiency. Now you know how quickly you spring to the front when any emergency arises. You know how easy it was for Peter to step forth with his sword drawn before he knew whether he was able to meet the foe or not. When something in which you are interested comes up, you say that you think under some sudden impulse, and then, perhaps, you have weeks of taking back your thought, and taking the Lord's instead. It is only as we get out of the way of the Lord that He can use us.

And so, beloved, let us practice the repression of self and the suspending of our will about everything until we have looked to Him and said, "Lord, what is Thy will? What is Thy thought about it?" When you have that, you and He are not at cross-purposes; and there is blessed harmony. Those who thus abide in Christ have the habit of reserve and quiet; they are not reckless talkers; they will not always have an opinion about everything, and they will not always know what they are going to do. They will be found holding back rash judgments, and walking softly with God. It is our headlong, impulsive spirit that keeps us so constantly from hearing and following the Lord.

#### Dependence

If we would abide in Christ we must remember that Christ has undertaken not only the emergencies of life, but everything; and so we must cultivate the habit of constant dependence on Him; falling back on Him and finding Him everywhere; recognizing that He has undertaken the business of your life, and there is not a difficulty that comes up, but He will carry you through if you let Him have His way and hold the reins, and you just trust and follow.

#### Recognizing His Presence

Again, if you would abide in Christ you must cultivate the habit of always recognizing Him as near, in your heart of hearts, so that you need not try to find Him, reaching out to the distant heavens and wondering where He has gone. He is right here; His throne is in your heart; His resources are at hand. There may be no sense of God's presence, but just accept the fact that the Spirit is in your heart, and act accordingly. Bring everything to Him, and soon the consciousness will become real and delightful. We do not begin with feeling--we begin with acting as though He were here. So, if you would abide in Christ, treat Him as if He were in you, and you in Him; and He will respond to your trust, and honor your confidence.

#### God In Everything

Further, if you would abide in Christ, you must recognize that Christ is in everything that comes in your life; and that everything that occurs in the course of Providence is in some sense connected with the will of God. That trying circumstance was not chance, something with which Christ had nothing to do, and which you can only protest against and wonder how God can sit on the throne and let such things be. You must believe that God led in it, and though the floods have lifted up their heads on high, yet God sits on the throne, and is mightier than the great sea billows and the noise of many waters. You must believe that He will "cause the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof will he restrain." You must say: "God is our refuge and strength, a very

present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

We need not regard everything as the very best thing that we would choose, or the very best thing that God ultimately has for you; but it is allowed, either that God may show you His power to overcome it, or else that it may teach you some lesson of holiness, trust, tranquillity, or courage. It is something that, under the circumstances, fits into God's purposes; and, therefore, you are not to look for different circumstances, but to conquer in these already around you. You are not to run away and say, "I will abide in Christ when I get to where I want to be," but you must abide in Christ in the ship and the storm, as well as in the harbor of blessing. Recognize that everything is permitted by God, and that He is able to make all things work together; and not only so, but to make you know they are all for your good, and they are working out His purposes.

#### Watch the Outward Senses

Again, if we would abide in Christ, we must be very watchful of our senses. There is nothing that so easily sets us wandering, and leads us out into dangerous fields and by-path meadows as the senses of the body. How often our eyes will take us away! Walking down the street you will find a thousand things to call you from a state of recollection. Some people's eyes are like a spider's--they see behind and before and on every side. You know Solomon says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." It is this letting the world in, no matter by what door it comes, that separates us from the presence of our Lord.

So with our ears. If you listen to one-hundredth part of the conversation even of Christians you will be thoroughly defiled; and so you have to hold your ears, and your eyes, and live in a little circle. You have not to manage half so many things as you undertake to sometimes, and about which you have so much anxiety.

There is a little creature called the water spider, and it lives in the water, away down in the mud lake of the marsh. It just goes down a few inches and lives there all the time. You ask how it can breathe and live in the water? Oh, it has a strange apparatus by which it is able to gather around itself a bubble of air a few times larger than its body. It goes to the surface and fills it with air and goes down, and this little air bubble forms an atmosphere for it, and there it builds its nest and rears its young; and you know where air is the water cannot get in. So it is as safe in its little home with the dark water all around it, as if it lived above in the clear air of heaven. So we can get into our element and stay there with Him, and although there is sin around us, and hell beneath us, and men are struggling and tempted and sinning, we shall be as safe as the saints above, in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus.

#### Internal Prayer

Once more, if we would abide in Him, we must cultivate the habit of internal prayer, communing with God in the heart. We must know the meaning of such words as "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you." This habit of silent prayer, not in word, but in thought, is one of the secrets of abiding. There is an old word the mystics used--"recollection." We would call it a recollected spirit.

#### Vigilance

There is another word in connection with abiding: it is vigilance--being wide awake. It is the opposite of drifting. It is the spirit of holding, and being ever on guard, and yet sweetly held by the Lord. Now this does not mean that you have to do all the holding and watching; you are to have your hand on the helm, and Christ will do the steering. It is like the brakes on the train--the brakeman only touches the lever and sets the current in motion; the engineer does not have to make the train go, he has only to turn the throttle. You and I do not need to fight our battles. We have only to give the watchword, and the powers of heaven follow it up if it is in the name of Jesus. So we may ever abide in fellowship and victory moment by moment, until at last He becomes the element of our very life.

#### Let God Lead

If we would abide in Christ, we must stop trying to have God help us, and fall into God's way and let Him lead. We must get the idea out of our spirit that we have chosen to serve Christ and we have got to have Christ help us. We must see, rather, that we have come into His way and He is carrying us because He cannot go any other way. If you get on the bosom of the river, you have to go down the river; if you are in the bosom of God, you have to go with Him. Only surrender yourself to God, and your life will be as strong as omnipotence and as sweet as heaven.

#### Surprises

We should, perhaps, speak of the surprises that come. Sometimes the Lord let sudden temptations sweep over you to put you on your guard; and if such things come into your life, take them as from Him, sent to put you on the watch and give you some hint, like the falling of the eyelash to let you know that the eye is threatened. But if you keep very close to Christ, I do not believe that these things will come as quickly as you think. They spring often from some heedlessness of your own. You are getting out of the way, and were not where the Lord expected you to be, and, perhaps, the surprise came to let you know that you had been in the enemy's country. If we abide in Him, all evil will have to strike us through Him. Perhaps you were a little out of your center and Christ let the enemy come to frighten you back to Him, just as the shepherd's dogs are sent to drive the lambs into the fold. Better that you should get a little fall than ultimately to meet with disaster.

#### Failures

But if, notwithstanding all your care, you make a mistake, if you have a disaster or a discouragement, don't say, "I have lost my blessing." "I have found this life impracticable"; but remember that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

#### How to Make God Real

A friend asked the question the other day, "How can I make God real?" God is not real to many people. He does not seem so real to that man as his difficult task; He does not seem so real to that woman as her work and her trials; He does not seem so real to that sufferer as his sickness. How shall we make Him real? The best way I know is to take Him into the things that are real. That headache is real. Take Him into it, and He will be as real as the headache, and a good deal more, for He will be there when the headache is gone. That trial is real; it has burned itself into your life; God will be more so. That washing and ironing are real; take God into your home, and He will be as real. That is what makes Him real--to link Him with your life.

So the banyan tree grows. First its trunk and branches shoot up to heaven, and then the branches grow down into the ground and become rooted in the earth, and by and by there are a hundred branches interwoven and interlaced from the ground so that the storm and the winds cannot disturb it, and even the simoon of the Indian Ocean cannot tear it up. It is rooted and bound together by hundreds of interlacing roots and branches. And so when God saves a soul He plants one branch; but when He comes to fill and sanctify and help in your difficulties, each is another branch; and thus your life becomes rooted and bound to God by a hundred fibres, and all the power of hell cannot break that fellowship or separate you from His love.

"Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me  
A living, bright reality,  
More present to faith's vision keen  
Than any outward object seen,  
More dear, more intimately nigh,  
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie.  
"Nearer and nearer still to me  
Thou living, loving Saviour be.  
Brighter the vision of Thy face,  
More glorious still Thy words of grace;  
Till life shall be transformed to love,  
A heaven below, a heaven above."