

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
15:7-11

7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done for you. 8. By this my Father is glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. 9. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. 10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

7.--[*If ye abide...done for you.*] In this verse our Lord continues to encourage the disciples to "abide in Him" by holding up to them a gracious promise. Abiding in Christ, their prayers will obtain signal and special replies. They shall ask what they will, and it shall be done for them.

The doctrine here laid down and implied is a very remarkable one. There are some Christians whose prayers are more powerful and effectual than those of others. The nearer a man lives to Christ and the closer his communion with Him, the more effectual will his prayers be. The truth of the doctrine is so self-evident and reasonable that no one on reflection can deny it. He who lives nearest to Christ will always be the man who feels most and prays most earnestly, fervently and heartily. Common sense shows that such prayers are most likely to get answers. Many believers get little from God because they ask little, or ask amiss. The holiest saints are the most earnest in prayer, and they consequently get the most.

We should note that our Lord says not only "if ye abide in Me," but adds "and my words abide in you." This means, "If my doctrine and teaching abide fresh in your memories and is continually influencing your lives." Our Lord guards against us supposing that a mere indolent abiding in Him, with a dreamy, mystical kind of religion, is what He means. His words must be burning like fire within us and constantly actuating our characters and lives.

When He says "ye shall ask what ye will," we must of course understand that His promise only includes things according to God's mind and for God's glory. Paul asked for the "thorn in the flesh" to depart, but his prayer was not granted. We need not, however, hesitate to believe that there is a special and peculiar power in the prayers of eminent saints: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). The prayers of Luther, Latimer, Knox, Welsh, Baxter, Herbert, Romaine, and other great saints are specially noted by their contemporaries as possessing power.

The Greek word rendered "it shall be done" means literally "it shall come to pass."

8.--[*By this...glorified...be my disciples.*] In this verse our Lord supplies two more reasons why His disciples should abide in Him and strive to bring forth much fruit of holiness. One reason is that it will glorify

His Father in heaven. Their good works will recommend their religion and make the world honor the God who has such servants. The other reason is that it will give evidence of their being real, true, genuine disciples. Their lives will prove plainly that they are followers of Christ.

The expression "so shall ye be" is literally "all ye shall be." It must mean, "Ye shall be known and recognized by all men as my disciples, and shall feel in your own hearts the witness of the Spirit that ye are such."

Poole remarks, "In Scripture, being often signifies appearing," as in John 8:31 and Romans 3:4.

9.--[*As the Father...I loved you.*] This remarkable statement seems intended to show the depth and magnitude of our Lord's love to His people. We can form no adequate idea of the love of the Father towards the Son. The feeling of one eternal Person in the Trinity to another Person is a high thing into which we cannot enter. Yet even such is the love of Christ towards those who believe in Him--a vast, wide, deep, unmeasurable love that passes knowledge and can never be fully comprehended by man.

[*Continue ye in my love.*] This must mean, "Continue resting your souls on this love of mine towards you, and live under a constant sense of it. Remain clinging to it, as within a fortress and place of refuge." Christ's free, continued, and mighty love should be the home and abiding place of a believer's soul.

The word rendered "continue" is the same that is rendered "abide" in verse 4, and ought to have been the same here.

10. [*If ye keep...abide in my love.*] Once more our Lord returns to the subject of practical obedience to His laws as the grand secret of a happy and comfortable religion. "If you keep my commandments, you will live in the enjoyment of a continued sense of my love to your souls and feel inwardly that you are my saved people." The doctrine here laid down is one of the great principles of experimental Christianity. Holy living and assurance of an interest in Christ are closely connected. Our own happiness and enjoyment of religion are inseparably bound up with our daily practical living. He who expects assurance, while he neglects Christ's commandments and gives way to daily inconsistencies of temper and conduct, is expecting what he will never get. "Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). Let those who will call such doctrine "legal." As a matter of fact, it will always be found true.

[*Even as I...abide in his love.*] The statement of this sentence is one of those that man can never fully grasp. That Christ kept the Father's commandments perfectly while we can only keep His imperfectly, and that He abides in the Father's love continually and without defect while our abiding in His love is at least fitful and uncertain, are truths which no intelligent Christian can dispute. In this, as in everything else, our Lord's example and pattern are propounded to us as things which we must strive to follow, though at a long distance and not always with sensible comfort. But we may remember that even when Jesus said on the cross, "My God, why have you forsaken Me," He was still abiding in the Father's love.

11.--[*These things...joy might be full.*] In this verse our Lord gives two reasons why all the things in His discourses were addressed to the disciples. One was that "his joy might abide," or remain, "in them"--that they might have a comfortable share of their Master's joy in their salvation and redemption. The other was that their own individual joy might be filled up and perfected. Two joys are named, we must observe. One is that special joy mentioned in Hebrews 12:2, which our Lord feels in the redemption of His people. The other is that joy which His people feel from a sense of Christ's love to their souls.

Here, as elsewhere, we should note that the joy of believers is a thing that admits of degrees and increase.

Cyril, on this verse, remarks that it is the mark of prosperous Christians to rejoice in those things in which Christ rejoices, and that this is the special object of the phrase "my joy"--"that ye may continually rejoice in those things in which I rejoice, and so your own inward happiness may be increased."