

# How to Remain in Christ: Begin with Faith

## John 1:12

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church  
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Intro. Here is a principle from John 15 that I tried to establish about four weeks ago.

**Principle:** Our job is to remain in Christ; his job is to bring forth fruit.

Notice how often Jesus refers to his disciples remaining in Him.

V. 4 **Remain** in me, and I will **remain** in you; No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must **remain** in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you **remain** in me.

V.5 If a man **remains** in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit . . . .

V.6 If anyone does not **remain** in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers . . . .

V.7 If you **remain** in me and my words **remain** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

V.9 Now **remain** in my love.

V.10 If you obey my commands, you will **remain** in my love, just as I have obeyed my father's commands and **remain** in his love.

What can we say about these verses?

1. They are for all Christians; that's why they are in John's gospel. (John himself tells us he edited his material with the general welfare in mind — John 20:30)
2. Jesus uses the word "remain" 11 times in this passage. The very least we can say is that our remaining in Christ is important to Jesus. He suffered and died to make it possible for us to remain in Him.
3. Over the next several weeks I intend to expand on what it takes to remain in Christ, but this morning it is my goal to emphasize how important it is to be *in* Christ, **because it is a dead certainty that you cannot remain in him if you were never in him in the first place.**

John 14:20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

To be in Christ is the most important thing in the world. So let me say it again.

**Principle:** **you cannot remain in Christ if you were never in him in the first place.**

4. Saving faith has to be discussed in three states: 1) the beginning of faith — often referred to

as salvation or the New Birth, 2) the continuation of faith — which is sometimes called perseverance, and 3) the realization of faith — sometimes called glorification. In John 15 Jesus is talking about the continuation of faith, or perseverance.

5. As I've said, John 15 is all about remaining, persevering in the faith. But you cannot persevere in anything until you've begun it. You cannot persevere in a bike trek across Canada unless you begin riding. Neither can you *remain* in Christ if you are not first *in* Christ. That is where faith comes in, most particularly the kind of faith the Bible distinguishes as "saving" faith.

In John 15 Jesus assumes he is speaking to disciples, those who believe in him. At that point on our Lord's last evening with His disciples the one unbeliever in the bunch had already gone away (Judas). Only true disciples were still with him, so Jesus could focus on the issue of their remaining in Him. We're in a little different situation here at Hawkwood. I have to believe I'm talking to a mixed multitude. So before I speak of remaining in Christ, I want to spend this morning urging you to ask yourself if you are in Christ to begin with.

6. What is saving faith? Let me introduce two passages of Scripture.

John 1:11-12 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

With those two verses in mind we can say that Saving Faith . . .

- a. Begins with confession of Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- b. Includes heart-felt repentance from sin based on a desire for personal righteousness and the knowledge that Christ has died for sin.
- c. Is built upon the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ.
- d. In modern times is often summarized in a suggested prayer.

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. (From *The Four Spiritual Laws*)

- e. Unfortunately, in our desire to make believers we sometimes rush them into praying the prayer without emphasizing one further necessary aspect of salvation.
7. Christ's personal call is one aspect of saving faith that is often left out of our understanding. We're going to look at a number of examples of people being called because too many Christians have never even heard of the necessity of being called to salvation.

a. The call of the original disciples.

Matthew 4 (the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John)

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,

22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matthew 9 (the call of Matthew)

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

John 1 (the call of Philip)

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Acts 26 (the call of Saul/Paul)

14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic . . . .

15 "I am Jesus . . . .

16 Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you."

b. The call of the first Christians on the day of Pentecost (Jewish)

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — *for all whom the Lord our God will call.*"

c. The call of the Christians at Corinth (Gentile)

I Corinthians 1

26 Brothers, think of what you were *when you were called*. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are,

29 so that no one may boast before him.

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

8. Hallmarks of the call to salvation: **You need to be testing yourself by this standard!**
- a. The call is from Christ himself: comes to the **individual**, is Christ's **personal** call and it is **direct**, in that Christ Himself speaks to your soul (by the Spirit) and calls you to faith in Him.
  - b. Call to obedience: Jesus says, "follow me," and the response is as individual, personal and direct as the call. Here is Paul, still responding personally and directly to his call, 20 years after he first heard it.

I Cor. 9:16 Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

- c. It is an empowering call. The disciples could follow, and did follow, because they had been called.
- d. Call to success (On Christ's terms): I will make you fishers of men (remain in me, bear much fruit)
- e. Call to trust and dependence: If I follow him, he will provide food, protection, purpose; he will set my schedule, etc. (remember, each of these men left a business or profession)
- f. Call to put Christ first, above all else in life (they all left businesses, family, property, community behind)
- g. None of the personal aspects of Christ's call are diminished when a crowd is involved (See Acts 2:39 especially)
- h. Peter expected the principle by which his walk had begun to be continued with all believers. (Acts 2:39)
- i. The call of Christ eliminates pride and self-sufficiency (See I Cor. 1:26ff)

Conclusion: Saving faith is both the gift of God and the duty of man. Have you been called? How did you respond? Do you have the strong sense that your salvation involved a personal encounter and call from Jesus Christ? **Can you finish your testimony like Paul, by making a definite commitment to a specific form of obedience?** "Woe is me . . . . This is the conversation of a person who is in Christ.

Master, Thou callest, I gladly obey.  
 Only direct me, and I'll find Thy way.  
 Teach me the mission appointed for me.  
 What is my labor, and where it shall be.  
 Master, Thou callest, And this I reply,  
 Ready and willing, Lord, here am I.

Living or dying, I still would be Thine,  
 Yet I am mortal While thou art divine.  
 Pardon, whenever I turn from the right,  
 Pity, and bring me again to the light.  
 Master Thou callest, And this I reply,  
 Ready and willing, Lord, here am I.  
 Here am I.

Willing, my Savior, to take up the cross.  
 Willing to suffer reproaches and loss.  
 Willing to follow if Thou will but lead.  
 Only support me With grace in my need.  
 Master, Thou callest, And this I reply,  
 Ready and willing, Lord here am I.