

To Remain in Christ You Must Persevere

John 15:9-10

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John 15

9 “As the father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

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.

Intro. In which we return to John 15 and our theme of the Spiritual Disciplines

1. The key verse for the entire series is 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”
2. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of remaining in Christ.
 - In Him there is spiritual power. Apart from Him? No power!
 - In Him there is eternal life. Apart from Him? No life!
 - In Him there is acceptance from God. Apart from Him? No acceptance!
 - In Him there is God’s love. Apart from Him? No love!
 - In Him there is salvation. Apart from Him? No salvation!
3. Those who remain in Christ will practice spiritual disciplines. This is an absolute statement. There are no escape clauses.

Now they may not practice *all* the spiritual disciplines. Sometimes their way of doing it won’t necessarily look like a spiritual *discipline*.

Bible reading may be haphazard at times. Worship attendance may appear to be a little weak. But it is simply impossible to be a Child of God and not spend time doing the things that bring you into His presence.

And if you want spiritual power in your life there is simply no substitute. No one wins an athletic competition without training. Nor does anyone advance themselves in Kingdom matters without training. This is where the spiritual disciplines come in.

4. We’ve already seen how Jesus touches on . . .
 - Scripture Intake (15:3,7)
 - Prayer (15:7-8)
5. Today we’re going to be looking at Perseverance. (15:9-10)

6. Here's a list of disciplines we'll look at in the coming weeks.

- Worship (15:11)
- Christian Fellowship (15:12,17)
- Service (15:13-14)
- Fasting (15:13-14)
- Learning (15:15)
- Stewardship (15:16)
- Silence and Solitude (15:18-25)
- Evangelism (15:26-27)

(Remember, these disciplines are for those who've been born again — those who possess a living faith in Jesus Christ. If you are not born again, the message to you is “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!” Spiritual disciplines in themselves cannot save you. Practising the spiritual disciplines is often one evidence of salvation. But no amount of Bible reading, prayer, meditation, or anything else that seems spiritual, can of itself bring you to God. For that you must have faith in Christ.)

Now we come to the them for today — perseverance.

Perseverance: simply means continuing with the disciplines of the Christian life until the end of your days, until they are as natural to you, and as necessary as eating and breathing.

Jesus said in our text (v.10): “If you obey my commands you will remain in my love.” The only way that sentence makes sense is if you apply it to your lifetime.

You don't just experiment with prayer a couple of times. To persevere you pray every day, every hour, sometimes every minute. You have set times for prayer and you also find ways to be spontaneous in prayer. Perseverance in Scripture intake doesn't mean an occasional glance at the Bible. It means you read it regularly and systematically, and above all, repeatedly.

And so with all the disciplines: worship, fellowship, service, fasting, learning, stewardship, silence and solitude, evangelism and whatever other disciplines God brings into your life. To persevere you do these things regularly and repeatedly.

Two men who persevered

- Avery Rogers: prayed all night
- C.S. Lewis: prayed on the train platform

Two sides to perseverance

- **God's preservation:** All those who are spiritually united to Christ through regeneration (spiritual birth) are eternally secure in Him. Nothing can separate them from the eternal and unchangeable love of God.

Phil. 1:6 “. . . being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

I want to highlight three truths from this verse. In every genuinely saved Christian 1) God begins the work of salvation, 2) God carries on the work of salvation, 3) God completes the work of Salvation. In other words, where God begins the work, God completes the work!

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me *has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*”

- This does not mean that all who profess salvation will go to heaven.
- It is those who are set apart by the Spirit of God (those in whom God has planted a true and living faith) who are secure in their salvation.
- Those who appear to fall from grace (those who do not persevere), were never actually in grace.
- True believers can fall into temptation, even commit grievous sins, but these sins do not separate them from God’s salvation.

Illustration: Here is a way to describe the difference between failures of the flesh and failures of the heart. A person may have a tendency to sleep late (that’s a sin, in case you didn’t know), but if you can wake him up he will arise and bless the Lord. Another person may naturally be an early riser, a natural organizer, a natural get-things-done kind of guy. Sometimes you will see such a person doing great things for the Kingdom — at least for a while. But if this person has no real love for Jesus, no love for Jesus that is born in him through a supernatural work of God, you will eventually find him gone, and with no real desire to return.

Charles Templeton — a classic example of a man who fell.

Demas — a Biblical example of a man who fell

“Mark, Aristarchus, *Demas* and Luke, my fellow workers” (Philemon 24).

“For *Demas*, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica” (II Tim. 4:10).

- **Man’s perseverance:** Man perseveres because God preserves. The evidence of God’s preservation is found in man’s perseverance.
- Here is what man’s perseverance looks like.
 - Accountability: the Christian cares what others think of his spiritual walk; he especially cares about what godly people think. He wants them to examine his life.
 - True Christian fellowship (as opposed to socializing): Small groups, SS classes, prayer meetings, etc. These are the venues in which we are encouraged to grow deeper in our spiritual walk, and remain faithful.
 - planning and scheduling: Plan to read the Bible, plan to pray, plan to evangelize, etc. Then schedule these things into your day, either formally or informally.
 - pruning and faithfulness: appreciating and accepting what God is doing when He is cutting away precious parts of your life that may distract you from His service, actually being grateful for the pain, glad for the loss. Becoming more faithful, not less.
 - appreciating the inescapability and purpose of struggle; we cannot grow strong in the Christian life without struggle.

Heb. 12:3-4 Consider him (Jesus) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

- Persistence in practising the disciplines; spiritually it's the only way to get ahead of the curve.

Conclusion: Back to today's text! If you look closely you will see that it is not primarily about perseverance. Not at all. It's all about love, and perseverance only enters into it secondarily, as proof of love, or as an outgrowth of love.

V. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I love you." When Jesus uttered those words not one of the disciples doubted it. Jesus' disciples have experienced His love! They come to Him because they know He died for them. They follow Him because in love He came to them. Is this true of your life?

Now we come to verse 10. We need to break it down into two logical statements.

- Obey Jesus' commands ⇨ remain in Jesus' love
- Jesus' obeyed his Father's commands ⇨ Jesus remained in His Father's love
- Why did Jesus obey His Father? Because the Father loved Him!
- Question: Can you really, truly, deeply know the love of God and not want to return that love back to Him? The answer is "NO."
- Now notice: In the Bible these two statements are connected by a simple phrase, "just as." Our relationship with Jesus is to be "just as" His relationship with His Father.
- Have you experienced the love of Jesus? Do you somehow feel, or know what it means for Him to die in your place on the cross, to embrace your sins as though they were His own, to willingly suffer for the things you have done against God?
- I will just add this. If you begin to experience that love, even just a little bit, your heart will overflow with a spontaneous desire to obey Jesus' commands.

So the main thing to learn about perseverance in Spiritual disciplines is that it is all based upon love! How long do most New Year's resolutions last? Five minutes? Most resolutions die as fast as they are uttered. Why? Because we do not love the things we resolve to do.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith — that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

