

Chapter 17 - Through the Holy Spirit

"The anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." I JOHN 2:27.

How beautiful the thought of a life always abiding in Christ! The longer we think of it, the more attractive it becomes. And yet how often it is that the precious words, "Abide in me," are heard by the young disciple with a sigh! It is as if he understands so little what they really mean, and can realize so little how this full enjoyment can be attained. He longs for some one who could make it perfectly clear, and continually again remind him that the abiding is in very deed within his reach. If such an one would but listen to the word we have from John this day, what hope and joy it would bring! It gives us the divine assurance that we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit to teach us all things, also to teach us how to abide in Christ.

Alas! someone answers, this word does not give me comfort, it only depresses me more. For it tells of another privilege I so little know to enjoy: I do not understand how the teaching of the Spirit is given--where or how I can discern His voice. If the Teacher is so unknown, no wonder that the promise of His teaching about the abiding does not help me much.

Thoughts like these come from an error which is very common among believers. They imagine that the Spirit, in teaching them, must reveal the mysteries of the spiritual life first to their intellect, and afterwards in their experience. And God's way is just the contrary of this. What holds true of all spiritual truth is specially true of the abiding in Christ: We must live and experience truth in order to know it. Life-fellowship with Jesus is the only school for the science of heavenly things. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," is a law of the Kingdom, specially true of the daily cleansing of which it first was spoken, and the daily keeping. Receive what you do not comprehend, submit to what you cannot understand, accept and expect what to reason appears a mystery, believe what looks impossible, walk in a way which you know not--such are the first lessons in the school of God. "If ye abide in my word, ye shall understand the truth": in these and other words of God we are taught that there is a habit of mind and life which precedes the understanding of the truth. True discipleship consists in first following, and then knowing the Lord. The believing surrender to Christ, and the submission to His word to expect what appears most improbable, is the only way to the full blessedness of knowing Him.

These principles hold specially good in regard to the teaching of the Spirit. That teaching consists in His guiding the spiritual life within us to that which God has prepared for us, without our always knowing how. On the strength of God's promise, and trusting in His faithfulness, the believer yields himself to the leading of the Holy Spirit, without claiming to have it first made clear to the intellect what He is to do, but consenting to let Him do His work in the soul, and afterwards to know what He has wrought there. Faith trusts the working of the Spirit unseen in the deep recesses of the inner life. And so the word of Christ and the gift of the Spirit are to the believer sufficient guarantee that He will be taught of the Spirit to abide in Christ. By faith he rejoices in what he does not see or feel: he knows, and is confident that the blessed Spirit within is doing His work silently but surely, guiding him into the life of full abiding and unbroken

communion. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; it is His work, not only to breathe, but ever to foster and strengthen, and so to perfect the new life within. And just in proportion as the believer yields himself in simple trust to the unseen, but most certain law of the Spirit of life working within him, his faith will pass into knowledge. It will be rewarded by the Spirit's light revealing in the Word what has already been wrought by the Spirit's power in the life.

Apply this now to the promise of the Spirit's teaching us to abide in Christ. The Holy Spirit is indeed the mighty power of God. And He comes to us from the heart of Christ, the bearer of Christ's life, the revealer and communicator of Christ Himself within us. In the expression, "the fellowship of the Spirit," we are taught what His highest work is. He is the bond of fellowship between the Father and the Son: by Him they are one. He is the bond of fellowship between all believers: by Him they are one. Above all, He is the bond of fellowship between Christ and believers ; He is the life-sap through which Vine and branch grow into real and living oneness: by Him we are one. And we can be assured of it, that if we do but believe in His presence and working, if we do but watch not to grieve Him, because we know that He is in us, if we wait and pray to be filled with Him, He will teach us how to abide. First guiding our will to a whole-hearted cleaving to Christ, then quickening our faith into ever larger confidence and expectation, then breathing into our hearts a peace and joy that pass understanding, He teaches us to abide, we scarce know how. Then coming through the heart and life into the understanding, He makes us know the truth--not as mere thought-truth, but as the truth which is in Christ Jesus, the reflection into the mind of the light of what He has already made a reality in the life. "The life was the light of men."

In view of such teaching, it is clear how, if we would have the Spirit to guide us into the abiding life, our first need is--quiet restful faith. Amid all the questions and difficulties that may come up in connection with our striving to abide in Christ--amid all the longing we may sometimes feel to have a Christian of experience to aid us--amid the frequent painful consciousness of failure, of ignorance, of helplessness--do let us hold fast the blessed confidence: We have the unction of the Holy One to teach us to abide in Him. "THE ANOINTING which ye have received of Him, ABIDETH IN you; and even as it hath taught you, YE SHALL ABIDE IN Him." Make this teaching of His in connection with the abiding a matter of special exercise of faith. Believe that as surely as you have part in Christ, you have His Spirit too. Believe that He will do His work with power, if only you do not hinder Him. Believe that He is working, even when you cannot discern it. Believe that He will work mightily if you ask this from the Father. It is impossible to live the life of full abiding without being full of the the Holy Spirit; believe that the fulness of the Spirit is indeed your daily portion. Be sure and take time in prayer to dwell at the footstool of the throne of God and the Lamb, whence flows the river of the water of life. It is there, and only there, that you can be filled with the Spirit. Cultivate carefully the habit of daily, yea, continually honouring Him by the quiet, restful confidence that He is doing His work within. Let faith in His indwelling make you jealous of whatever could grieve Him--the spirit of the world or the actings of self and the flesh. Let that faith seek its nourishment in the Word and all it says of the Spirit, His power, His comfort, and His work. Above all, let that faith in the Spirit's indwelling lead you specially, to look away to Jesus; as we have received the anointing of Him, it comes in ever stronger flow from Him as we are occupied with Him alone. Christ is the Anointed

One. As we look up to Him, the holy anointing comes, "the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garments." It is faith in Jesus that brings the anointing; the anointing leads to Jesus, and to the abiding in Him alone. Believer, abide in Christ, in the power of the Spirit. What think you, ought the abiding longer to be a fear or a burden? Surely not. Oh, if we did but know the graciousness of our Holy Comforter, and the blessedness of wholly yielding ourselves to His leading, we should indeed experience the divine comfort of having such a teacher to secure our abiding in Christ. The Holy Spirit was given for this one purpose--that the glorious redemption and life in Christ might with divine power be conveyed and communicated to us. We have the Holy Spirit to make the living Christ, in all His saving power, and in the completeness of His victory over sin, ever present within us. It is this that constitutes Him the Comforter: with Him we need never mourn an absent Christ. Let us therefore, as often as we read, or meditate, or pray in connection with this abiding in Christ, reckon upon it as a settled thing that we have the Spirit of God Himself within us, teaching, and guiding, and working. Let us rejoice in the confidence that we must succeed in our desires, because the Holy Spirit is working all the while with secret but divine power in the soul that does not hinder Him by its unbelief.