

The Confidence in Discipleship

John 15:7-11

If you have been with us for the past few weeks considering discipleship, you have realized following the Lord is not for the faint of heart or uncommitted. The Lord has spoken about denying ourselves, bearing our cross, and following Him. He spoke of the degree of love we must have for Him, love that exceeds all others and all other pursuits in life. We were reminded that these are not mere suggestions for our consideration, but genuine expectations for everyone who will follow Christ. I think you will agree that being a disciple of Christ is a serious endeavor.

As we have considered previous passages, some may have felt a bit overwhelmed and unprepared. You may have questioned how any of this is possible. All that we have discussed up to this point go against human nature and the desires of the flesh. I hope you realize that you will never be successful following the Lord in your own ability. While the flesh resists the leading of the Spirit in following Christ, there is hope. Our Lord knew this would be difficult. In fact He knew it would be impossible apart from Him. **John 15:5 – I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.** Here Jesus reveals the certainty of being fruitful in Him, but He also reveals the requirement: abiding in Him. Apart from Christ we can do nothing, but through Him we can bear much fruit.

If you have struggled with the previous studies, I hope today's passage will provide the encouragement you need to completely follow Christ. While it is impossible within our own abilities, we can be fruitful through Christ. You can enjoy great confidence serving the Lord. Let's examine the **assurances** of Christ as we consider: **The Confidence in Discipleship**.

I. Confidence in our Position (7-8) – While serving the Lord will have its share of difficulties, we can enjoy great confidence through our position in Christ. If God be for us, who can be against us! Consider:

A. The Conditions (7) – **If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.** While great confidence serving the Lord is available, He reveals some conditions regarding our service and success as disciples. The first seems rather obvious, but it is vital to our confidence and success. We must *abide* in Christ and allow His words to *abide* in us. This involves our daily communion with Him through prayer, Bible study, and meditation. We cannot expect to be victorious in our walk with the Lord if we aren't spending quality time with Him! **1 John 2:27 – But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.**

➤ Jesus speaks of *abiding*, and He also speaks of *abundance*. Those who abide in Him and in His Word, enjoy the abundance of Christ. We are guaranteed an audience with Him for our needs and intercessions. **Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.** That offers great confidence while serving the Lord. He is ready and willing to supply whatever we need as we strive to serve Him. Now, don't misunderstand the text. We must keep it in context. He is dealing with those who are abiding in Him and the Word. He doesn't promise we will immediately have every request answered. This is not a support text for a prosperity gospel. If we are abiding in Christ, our desires will be consistent with His will, and we are promised His help and guidance.

B. The Consequence (8) – **Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my**

disciples. This statement is directly tied to the previous one. If we are abiding in Christ, and enjoying His abundance, this is the consequence of such behavior. First of all the Father is glorified. He is pleased with the life a disciples leads. Such surrender and obedience always brings glory and honor to the Father. He is exalted through our lives as we make Him the priority and point others to Him. Should that not be every believers desire, to glorify God?

➤ Jesus reveals such abiding results in the producing of much fruit. This brings glory to the Father and confidence to the believer. Those who are seeing fruit produced find great encouragement while serving the Lord. If we will draw nigh to Christ, committed to abiding in Him, we will be fruitful. As fruit is being produced, there will be a hunger for more, bringing great confidence and satisfaction in our Christian walk.

➤ Jesus also reveals that fruit is a character trait of disciples. If genuine fruit is being produced in your life, you are considered a disciple of Christ. When the enemy seeks to discourage you, consider the fruit being produced and rest in the Lord. He hasn't asked us to perform miracles to be considered disciples, just to be fruitful. That brings great confidence!

II. Confidence through our Provision (9-10) – Here Jesus speaks of the great provision we have through Him. Such provision ought to ensure confidence while serving the Lord. Consider:

A. The Confirmation (9a) – **As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.** We likely don't consider this enough, but when we do it is overwhelming. There can be no doubt of the Father's love for the Son. Jesus declares that His love for us is the same as the Father's love for Him. Love serves as a great motivator. We will go out of our way, making great sacrifices for those we love. The love Christ has for us ought to motivate us to serve Him with every fiber of our being. He loved us enough to bear our sin and endure the judgement we deserved. Surely we can serve One who loved that much!

B. The Challenge (9b) – *continue ye in my love*. That is a simple command and yet it is very profound. The love of Christ is consistent with the love of God. We are obligated to continue in His love. This involves abiding in Christ. We are to continue in the love of Christ. We are to live our lives according to His great love. We are to submit ourselves to the Lord, seeking to please Him in every action of life. We must strive to return the great love we have received. Our love for Christ should be stronger today than it was the moment we were saved. The longer we serve the Lord, and walk with Him, the stronger our love for Him should grow!

➤ We must also consider the love of Christ is sacrificial and abounding. He loved us when we were unlovable. He died for the sins of those who despised and rejected Him. His love compelled Him to suffer in our place, being declared guilty when He was righteous and holy. We are obligated to love as Christ loved, and that includes our love for others! As He loves the world, we too must love the world, and those who are yet unsaved.

C. The Comfort (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*. I am sure we, like the disciples then, question how such love is possible. How do we, dwelling in bodies prone to sin and selfishness, love as Christ loved? How do we abide in His love? He reveals we must keep His commandments. Now I realize that requires much, but there is comfort as well. If we will commit to following the Lord, abiding in Him and in His Word, we will be well on our way to keeping His commandments. If we are to love as Christ loved, we must walk with Him. As we grow and mature in the faith, our ability to love will increase. As we mature in Christ, our resolve to please Him will grow as well. We will find ourselves desiring His will for our lives more than we desire to please the flesh.

➤ It is possible to live a life that pleases the Lord and bears witness of Him. Abiding in the love of Christ provides great strength and advantage for the disciple! *John 14:21 – He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

III. Confidence in our Possession (11) – *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*. I can think of nothing that offers more confidence than being equipped for the task at hand. Jesus understood the necessity for disciples to be equipped for their journey. Abiding in Him provides all we need to be properly equipped. We will have all we need to serve the Lord and bear fruit for Him. Notice:

A. His Abiding (11a) – *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you*. This should put to rest any concern a disciple might have. Jesus declares it is possible to possess His

abiding joy. Such joy cannot be adequately expressed or emphasized. He doesn't say that serving Him will be without adversity or conflict. He doesn't say there won't be any sacrifices along the way, but that His joy would remain in us. Regardless of what we face, we have the possession of Christ's joy in our hearts!

➤ Such joy will motivate us, even when we feel as if hope is lost. Such joy will compel us to share our faith, even when we fear no one will be receptive. Such joy will provide the strength we need to continue in the journey during times of adversity and drought! I am thankful for the joy available in Christ the Lord. Without it, we would have little confidence or motivation in our service.

B. His Abundance (11) – *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* Jesus desires the disciple to experience the very best He has to offer. He doesn't just offer life, but life more abundantly. He doesn't speak of mere fruit being produced, but much fruit. Here He doesn't desire ample joy, but overwhelming, abundant joy. He desires us to be filled with His joy!

➤ That offers great encouragement to me. It isn't something to be considered lightly or casually sought. We desperately need the joy of Christ to have confidence while serving Him. I do not imply that we are able to secure our own salvation through personal sacrifice, but consider a powerful statement regarding the joy of Christ. *Heb.12:2 – Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* Christ possessed the ability to look toward the cross with joy, knowing His sacrifice would secure our salvation. If we possess the joy of Christ in abundance, His joy can equip us to endure whatever comes our way!

Conclusion: I will agree that serving the Lord requires great sacrifice. I have never met anyone, with a sincere desire to serve the Lord, who felt adequate or prepared. Those who serve Him realize their inability. We must depend upon Christ for the strength and guidance we need. He is able to equip us, and He desires our service to be fruitful, abounding in His great love and joy. This passage has comforted me and brought confidence in serving the Lord.

Are you struggling in your efforts of service? Are you bearing fruit for Christ? Are you abiding in Him? Do you experience His great joy in life? If there are needs, Christ wants to help you today. He wants to equip you as His disciple. Come to Him for the needs you have. If you have yet to receive Christ as your Savior, I urge you to come to Him by faith in salvation!