

Christian Love And Wordly Hatred

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Date: 19 March 2017

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[0 : 0 0] I've talked to enough Christians in my life to realize that at some point in their life, many of them feel a gap between what they think, what they believe, and how they feel.

And they're left wondering why their life looks so different from the Christian life that the Bible speaks of. Didn't Jesus say, John 7, whoever believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Well, then why does my life just feel like a trickle at times? And this sense of disconnect could cause discouragement, frustration, even cynicism.

And John 15 teaches us to connect those dots, to bridge that gap, that disconnect. And the key to all of it, according to this passage, is abiding in the love of Christ.

And so it teaches us this passage that abiding in the love of Christ enables us to bear enduring witness amidst the hatred of the world. And there's really simple but very profound truths that can transform your life in this passage.

[1 : 1 6] And I'm going to cover those in three parts. First, talk about the Christian love. Secondly, about the worldly hatred. And lastly, about the enduring witness that we're supposed to bear in light of that.

And the first part is going to be the most discernment. So when I say second point, 30 minutes in, 30 minutes in, don't be discouraged. I will not be going on for another hour or so.

Okay. So Jesus starts off saying in verse 1, read with me, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. So catch that.

Jesus doesn't say that I am the vine. He says I am the true vine. This is significant because it suggests that there are false vines that people cling to but give no life, as Jesus does.

And in the Old Testament, the vine is frequently a symbol for Israel, the covenant people of God. So for example, in Isaiah chapter 5, verses 1 to 7, God speaks of how he planted Israel as his vineyard and Judah as his choice vines, yet they bore no fruit.

[2 : 1 7] I mean, they did bear fruit, but they bore wild grapes that were useless for consumption. And similarly, in Psalm 80, 14 to 16, he prays to God, the psalmist, Watch over this vine, the root of your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself.

So this one, this prophecy is really significant because not only does it have a picture of the vine representing Israel, and it also calls him son, it calls Israel his son who has been rejected.

And then it prophesies about a son of man that God has raised up, that God will raise up for himself, and that points to Jesus, who calls himself most frequently in the Gospel of John as the son of man.

And so then Jesus is saying, when he says, I am the true vine, he's the one that fulfills what Israel, God's people, could not fulfill. He's the vine now, and through abiding in him, being in him, then we become the people of God through Jesus Christ.

So then if Jesus is the true vine, the Father is the vine dresser. So he says in verse 2, and the vine dresser does two things. The first thing he does is, every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

[3 : 41] So he cuts off the dead branches and throws them away in order to give more room for the living branches, so that they may thrive. And note that these dead branches that the Father takes away are described already as in Jesus.

Let me sketch that. So, and I don't think that means that we could, you know, tease out a controversial theological point from that minor detail and analogy, because it's an analogy, right?

So I don't think that means that genuine Christians who had real faith in Jesus are going to be taken away. I don't think that's what it's saying here, because John said clearly in chapter 6, verses 37 to 38, All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day, right? So Jesus will not lose any of the people that the Father has entrusted to him.

And the fact that in verse 6 that they're taken away and burned suggests that they're not the people that God, the Father gave to Jesus. But now, we shouldn't rationalize it away and let the verse lose its force, because it still serves as a real warning for us.

[4 : 52] It's possible for someone to have all the external signs of being in Christ, yet not be in Christ, be unregenerate. There could be baptism, church attendance, moral living.

But if the fruit are just external accretions, things like fruit that's stapled onto a tree, not organic internal growth that Jesus is speaking of, then that's not real fruit.

The fruit will not last, and the branches will die, and they will be taken away. And Scripture in many places speaks of those who experience some degree of familiarity with Christ and connection to Christ, but nevertheless fail to persevere.

And by doing so, betray their spiritual alienation, the fact that they were never in Christ. So that should serve as a real warning for us. And then now, first, God the Father, as a vine, just takes away the branches that do not bear fruit.

And then he does a second thing, and he deals with those branches that are bearing fruit. And that's surprising, because you would think, well, if the branch is bearing fruit, just let it be, right? You leave it alone. Don't fix it unless it's broken, right?

[6 : 07] But Jesus doesn't do that. He says, the Father, the vine dresser doesn't do that. Because if it's, it says, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

So the vine dressers prune their plants, meaning they cut off branches and buds that are diseased or structurally unsound, so that the plant thrives, it grows even more and bears even more fruit.

And God the Father does this. He prunes every single branch that bears fruit. Every branch that's bearing fruit, he prunes it. It may bear more fruit. And notice that there's no timetable here.

It doesn't say the pruning will sometime be done, and he will not be pruning you anymore. It doesn't say that he will be so abundant in your fruit bearing that you're not going to have to, need to bear more fruit anymore. The growth is constant, and the pruning is to the end of our life.

He prunes always so that we could bear more fruit. As J.C. Ryle writes in one of his books, the Christian life is not like animal life, which grows up to a certain point and stops, whether it is like plant life, which grows and keeps growing in strength and vigor all its days.

[7 : 17] That means we can't ever be complacent or content with our level of growth or fruitfulness. We have to be like Paul who says in Philippians 3, not that I've already been made perfect, but he presses on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called him heavenward in Christ Jesus.

That's always, we're always pressing on, always growing, always abiding more deeply so that we can bear more fruit. So if you are then not making daily strides to abide in Christ and bear more fruit, then you are complacent.

And if you think that you've already arrived and you don't need to grow anymore or bear more fruit, then you're conceited. And neither is an option for the Christian. And of course, pruning involves cutting away, and it's painful.

No matter how sinful or noxious or extraneous the part that God trims from our lives, it's painful. And there's a wordplay here in this passage between the word takes away and prunes in verse 2.

The words have the same root. And so the purpose is fundamentally different. The action's similar. It involves cutting and taking away. And recognizing this truth will provide no small comfort for us when we're experiencing the pain of pruning.

[8 : 40] It's because God is jealous for our love. He will not stand any competing affections in our lives, the idolatries of our hearts. So he will prune, trim, cut away, anything that prevents, hampers our growth.

A divestment must precede his investment. A sort of death must take place before there can be new life. Just as the Heavenly Father disciplines his legitimate children, the Heavenly fine dresser trims.

He prunes the branches that bear fruit so that they bear more fruit. So maybe some of you are in that stage where you could recall some painful removal of something in your life.

Well then that should help you realize that it's not a sign of God's absence that you're experiencing that or his lack of care. But it's his painstaking care for you.

That's why you are being pruned and you are being trimmed. And what is the fruitfulness that Jesus speaks of?

[9 : 58] What are the fruits? So Jesus said in John 4, 36, Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

And in John 12, 24, he said, Jesus said, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. So the fruit, in both of those contexts, the other two occasions where the word is used in the Gospel of John refer to the fruit of witness.

Demonstrating and proclaiming the good news of Jesus. That's the fruit that Jesus is speaking of. And the harvest of disciples, new disciples that come after that. So it's not referring just to the harvest, but also to that whole witness.

And that makes sense of this immediate context as well because Jesus had said in chapter 14, we talked about this last week or a couple weeks ago, that whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do.

And these greater works, we learn that, are the works of witness, witnessing to Jesus Christ. And now, after this passage about the vine, Jesus will once again return to the theme of witnessing with the help of the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 13] So that's what he has in the view here, the fruit bearing, bearing witness to Jesus. And he continues to talk about this in verse 3. Already, you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Lest we think that this focus on fruit bearing means that we're not going to be accepted by Jesus or we're not cleansed by him unless we bear fruit, he tells us, you're already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

And the word clean is spelled almost exactly the same way as the word prunes. Again, there's a word play there in verse 2. It sounds similar. And so parallel, it reinforces the connection between the two.

It's those who are already clean that God prunes. He doesn't prune you to make you clean. You're already clean in Jesus. So that recalls what Jesus told his disciples. Those who are already clean do not need to, you know, take a bath.

They only need to wash their feet. You guys remember that? So Jesus' word is the message he proclaims and embodies. And it's by believing that word that we are cleansed. And it's those who are clean that God prunes for even greater faithfulness.

[12 : 22] So fruitfulness, then, is the evidence of our cleansing. It's not the basis for our cleansing. Then fruit bearing is clearly important, right, because it's the evidence of our prior cleansing.

But let me point out the fact that nowhere in this passage does Jesus tell us to bear fruit. There's no command here that says bear fruit. Read what Jesus says in verse 4 to 5.

Verse 4 to 5. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. See, fruit bearing is descriptive.

It's not prescriptive. It's the abiding that is commanded, not fruit bearing. He doesn't tell us to bear a lot of fruit. He tells us simply to abide in him because abiding in Christ is the cause and fruit bearing is simply the byproduct of that abiding.

[13 : 34] That means we can't as Christians manufacture fruit. The fruits are rather an organic byproduct of our abiding in Jesus. So then that means we shouldn't be obsessed with judging our fruits, examining ourselves to see whether we're doing what Christ calls us to do.

Rather, we assess our faithfulness. Are we abiding in Jesus? Are we faithful to him? Are we clinging to Jesus? Because apart from him we can do nothing. In the Old Testament, the word abide is used consistently to refer to God and his word.

And that characteristically contrasts the eternal God who abides, remains, is unchanging and the world that is temporal and transitory that's changing.

And so Jesus points to the fact that he remains, the same word, abides forever in John 8, 35, 36 as a proof of his divine sonship.

And last chapter in chapter 14, the word dwell was used. It's the same word as the word abide to refer to the triune God's dwelling in us, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 50] And in that same way Jesus calls us abide in me and I in you. It's pointing to a permanence, kind of an inviolable union.

But how exactly do we do that? How do we abide? I think there's some clues in the Gospel of John.

In chapter 6, 54 to 56, Jesus said, whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

And then earlier in that same chapter Jesus explained that feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood involves looking on the Son and believing in him. So then, to abide in Christ is to believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So that's one way we abide in Christ. We cling to him that the means, the faith is the means by which take hold of him and cling to him and abide in him. And that's what Paul prays for for the Ephesians church in chapter 3 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[16 : 23] And I don't know if you ever wondered Paul's writing to believers in that context so by definition they already have God dwelling in them so why does he pray for Christ to dwell in their hearts?

It's because even though through our initial faith and being born again yes, God, Christ does dwell in our hearts once and for all but our subjective experience of that objective reality is not perfect.

We grow. I think of a couple that gets married right and they once they're married they say the vows they're married right I mean that's they don't have to do anything they don't have to live another day together they're married at that moment when they say the vows and perform the ceremony they're married they're now a union that's an objective reality but that's not to say that 60 years later of faithful marriage when that couple is now able to finish each other's sentences anticipate each other's needs and to care for one another in ways that no one else in the world can we could say their union has grown the communion which is the experience of the objective union has grown right so that's what Paul prays for right abide so that Christ may dwell in your heart so then what does that look like let me give you some examples abiding in Christ means believing that we are in Christ and that Christ is in us right so then when you feel discouraged and defeated by sin and Satan accuses you and tells you that you are a failure and a disappointment and he lies to you that God has abandoned you you are not worthy to approach him then you remember that you are in Christ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God and through faith for as many of you as you were baptized into Christ you put on Christ we have the righteousness the impenetrable armor of Christ covering us we have put him on we are in Christ

Christ is our surrogate in that court of divine justice he is our advocate our defense attorney and he has never lost the case so then we believe that we are in Christ and we don't let Satan hold us down in guilt and shame as if he had any claim on us he has no claim on us just as he has no claim on Jesus as he said in chapter 14 30 and similarly that when you are daunted and by circumstances present circumstances maybe and future prospects and you feel inadequate and powerless to fulfill God's call on your life then you remember the words of Galatians 2 20 you remember that Christ is in you I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me Christ is in you the almighty God the son of God the Lord of creation is in you and so we can say along with Paul we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us and so that's a picture of abiding in him through believing and this requires daily renewal because every day we wake up in the morning the default state that we wake up with is hey

I need to go out there and prove myself I need to go out there and make a name for myself I need to go out there and win people's affections do you really love me do you really think I'm great that's the default pattern the current of this world that's what we wake up to but we cling instead to Christ and his words over us so that we can be secure in who he says he is that we are in him that Christ is in us and that we are in Christ so then believing in Christ that's one way we're supposed to abide in him but that's not the only way that Jesus mentions mentions in verses 9 to 11 as the father has loved me so have I loved you abide in my love if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love so another indispensable way in which we abide in Christ is through obedience so faith and obedience this is what

[21 : 18] John Calvin wrote of in his Institutes of Christian Religion it says all right knowledge of God is born of obedience it's in obeying God's will that we abide in his love because in obedience the obedience itself shapes our inclinations it affects our hearts and increases our faith and just as disobedience every step of disobedience desensitizes our conscience and hardens our hearts every obedience softens our hearts and sharpens our conscience when we obey we sense God's pleasure when we obey we discern the goodness and wisdom of God in his commandments when we obey we become more like him and draw closer to him through that process and what exactly are the commandments that Jesus wants us to keep he sums it all up in verses 12 to 13 this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends we abide in the love of Christ particularly by obeying this new commandment that sums it up to love one another that's why

John writes in his first epistle chapter 4 if we love one another God abides in us and his love is perfected in us you can't have a relationship with the king without being a part and having a relationship with his kingdom you can't claim to have a relationship with Christ who is the head of the church and ignore the body of Christ which is the church you can't have a relationship with Christ who is the bridegroom and ignore his bride the church the clearest proof of your love for God is not how you subjectively feel in your heart it's not how great your devotion was that morning the true test of your devotion to God how you love him is how you love the people around you the church so let me ask you are you concerned for the welfare of the people sitting around you do you mourn their sin are you burdened by their sin you pray for them do their concerns drive you to your knees do you care about them enough to want to see them to meet with them regularly this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you and the standard for this love that God calls us to is not our love but it's Christ's love his sacrificial love laying down his own life he has the cross in view are we willing to love each other sacrificially in that way and I don't want you to assume just because

John has such an emphasis on this for love for one another I don't want you to assume from this that then we're only supposed to love fellow Christians we're not supposed to love our neighbors because Jesus calls us to love our neighbors and he calls us even to love our enemies he talks about it in Matthew 5 if you love only those who love you what reward will you get are not even the tax collectors doing that he says if you greet only your brothers then what are you doing more than others do not even the pagans do that he says but our love for one another comes into special focus here because that means by which abide in Christ but even in that Jesus reveals his concern for the lost because what was the purpose of this abiding is so that we may be fruitful and what was the fruit it's the fruit of witness so that people may see so that our abiding can produce the works that authenticate the word that we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ so then our love for God flows into our love for one another and our love for one another flows into our love for neighbors so to summarize then there are two ways to abide in the love of Christ first is faith and second obedience as Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes about this in his book

Cost of Discipleship only those who obey can believe and only those who believe can obey right if we emphasize only the faith then we'll end up with cheap grace and lawlessness if we emphasize only the obedience then we end up with works righteousness salvation by works and legalism it's only by holding those two things together that we can abide in Jesus and that's the simple but profound truth that that song sings about trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey and for the Christian this abiding is not a chore it's because it's a joy Jesus says in verse 11 these things I've spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full because it's our relationship with Jesus when we go to God's word we don't just go so that we can check off that box on our reading plan for that day we go to God's word because we know in it we encounter

Jesus and he speaks to us we pray not just regurgitating words that we've familiarized ourselves with over the years no we are conversing with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ it's that relationship that gives value that motivates that enables our abiding that's why it's joyful for us it's not a chore and those who abide in Jesus get to enjoy the wonderful privilege of being called his friends verses 14 to 15 you are my friends if you do what I command you no longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing but I have called you friends for all that I have heard from my father I have made known to you this doesn't mean that we become friends of Christ when we obey his commandments it means that those who are his friends obey his commandments it's what characterizes those who are his friends and Jesus says that he doesn't call them servants but friends because a servant does not know the master's will if you imagine a dictator or a master he has a servant that does his bidding he doesn't tell the servant why he wants to do something he just needs to tell him what that's what a master does he doesn't divulge his thoughts inner thoughts his plans his desires to his servant he just says no go do this but Jesus doesn't do that with us he says no I have called you friends so he reveals his will to us he shares his thoughts and plans with us and he involves us even though we're just creatures and he's the creator he involves us in his plans keeps us in the know longer do

[28 : 42] I call you servants but I have called you friends but let's not take that a little too far I've seen that happen also and that doesn't mean we can go around calling Jesus our homeboy or whatever else might be right it's that's the meaning to God because it's interesting that in scripture God sometimes calls his people his friends like in this passage but the converse of that statement is never found in all of scripture Abraham is described as God's friend Moses is described as God's friend Jesus calls Lazarus his friend but none of them ever call God their friend it's almost as scripture is reluctant to bring God down to our level as equals it speaks of God's condescension but never presumes on this gracious overture of God so then yes Christ graciously calls us his friends but be sure to note that this is as a king who condescends to his subjects but that's what makes this gesture even more amazing right that he offers his friendship to us even though we are not his equal this is an amazing revelation and whenever in John

Jesus makes an amazing promise revelation like this he he deflates his disciples balloons to make sure they don't get too big headed and so that's what happens in this next verse verse 16 you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the father in my name he may give it to you note the stark contrast between this statement right and all the conditional statements in verses 6 to 7 right if anyone does not abide in me he's thrown away like a branch and withers if you abide in me and my words abide and you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you so which is true then Jesus does our fruit bearing depend on your choice and appointment or our abiding the answer is yes to both right and maybe one way to explain that or frame that maybe is by thinking of approximate cost or an immediate cost and an ultimate cost right we got some

Cornell graduates here the ninth president of Cornell University he's a geologist Frank Rhodes used this amazing analogy to explain different types of causes he asks the question why is the kettle boiling right there's two ways to explain that right one way to explain that is simply well there's energy being supplied to that kettle which is bringing the water to the boiling point that's why the kettle is boiling and that's a very true and correct explanation but there's a second explanation the kettle is boiling because someone put it on to make a cup of tea and that's a very valid and right explanation of that situation as well right and they're related and in fact we need them both in order to make sense of what's happening there they're complementary they're not mutually exclusive the immediate cause the fire the boiling the science behind that and the ultimate cause the man behind it who's willing to boil that tea for himself and so we could think of that this way here yes our faith and our obedience our abiding and our clinging to

Christ that's the immediate cause the proximate cause that's why we bear fruit but behind all of that and transcending all of that to bear fruit they're both true that's why he calls us to abide but that doesn't puff us up or make us arrogant because we're doing it so well because we know that it's God who chose us first and appointed us for that and this is particularly important and now I'm going to my second point of worldly hatred because of the context in which we're to live out this commandment verses 18 to 21 please follow along with me as I read if the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you if you were of the world the world would love you as its own but because you are not of the world but

I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you remember the word that I said to you servant is not greater than his master if they persecuted me they will persecute you also if they kept my word they will also keep yours but all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me Jesus taught us in John 7 that ultimately the world hates Jesus because Jesus testifies to the world that its works are evil Jesus exposes the darkness of the world because he's the light of the world and that's why and because the world hated him and they sent him to the cross he says you are no greater than me I'm your master if they treated the master in this way certainly the servants will be treated in that way and if you're a skeptic and you don't believe in Jesus yet you don't belong to him and you're part of this world and at this point you might be like oh whoa that sounds a little bit overblown what do you mean hatred persecution

[34 : 55] I mean that's not what at all I'm thinking but let me tell you that the world hatred here is not so much referring to a vehement emotion but rather it's referring to that fundamental opposition that the world is diametrically opposed to Jesus and his cause and Jesus teaches in Matthew 12 that whoever is not with him is against him there's no other option there's no middle ground and what divides the world is his word it says in verse 20 if they persecuted me they will also persecute you if they kept my word they will also keep yours and you have this invitation in front of you to keep his word how will you divide around his proclamation that he is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world that he is the son of God who has come into the world to save sinners and because Jesus has borne such extraordinary and unprecedented witness we have a greater burden of responsibility on us to respond and if you already belong to

Jesus then this serves as a warning for you so that you're not surprised when persecution comes expect opposition and recognize that the hatred of the world is what makes it all the more important that we abide in the love of Christ and love one another so then it's in light of this harsh reality of the hatred of the world that Jesus returns once again to the theme that began all of this dialogue to bearing witness in verses 26 to 27 he says but when the helper comes whom I will send to you from the father the spirit of truth who proceeds from the father he will bear witness about me and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from to suggest that this is a person the helper is not just some impersonal force that Jesus sends to us to help us not a vague idea an abstract thing but he's a person that's why

Jesus said last week that he will send another helper another helper like Jesus himself who is intimately with us present with us and he will help us to bear witness along beside him and Jesus in the conclusion of his dialogue here mentions the hour twice in verse 2 and 4 of chapter 16 he says indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God and this certainly came true in the persecution of the Jews in the immediate aftermath and verse 4 speaks of their hour that is coming the hour of those who are persecuting God's people and in the gospel of John as we have seen over and over again the hour is code word for Jesus death resurrection and ascension and here that hour corresponds to their hour and to the hour of the disciples persecution and even death the threat of death because they are his servants and he is the master that the world persecuted but the hour of our suffering does not compare to the hour of

Christ's suffering because the sting of death has been removed by Jesus already he has already dealt with sin on the cross for us so that when we suffer so that when we are persecuted we do not we are not forsaken by the father because Christ was forsaken in our place we are not shouldering the sin and shame of the world or even our own because Jesus bore our sin and shame and because of that it strengthens us to abide in him in the midst of persecution I began the sermon by talking about the gap that people experience right between our belief and our experience and how abiding in Christ is a key to bridging that and that is true and we grow in that but it's also true that we live in a kingdom that is already here and not yet here right we we live as people who are already new creation yet with indwelling sin in our flesh we live as people who are already filled with the

Holy Spirit yet sometimes we don't feel rivers of living water flowing out and while we live in this gap C.S.

[39 : 49] Lewis offers a helpful reminder he writes the presence of God is not the same as the sense of the presence of God the latter may be due to imagination the former may be attended with no sensible consolation the act which engenders a child ought to be and usually is attended by pleasure but it is not the pleasure that produces the child where there is pleasure there may be sterility where there is no pleasure the act may be fertile and in the spiritual marriage of God and the soul it is the same it is the actual presence not the sensation of the presence of the Holy Ghost which begets Christ in us and the sense of the presence is a super added gift for which we give thanks when it comes so when we're in that dry season when we're feeling the absence of joy when we're not feeling that communion with

Christ we still know and believe in that objective union with Christ and that's what helps us and that's what fosters and facilitates our communion that's what helps us abide in him and when we do we grow in that communion that gap gets narrower and narrower and narrower and we experience more and more of his joy the fullness that he promises until that day when we say we are one at last with the Lord there will be no gap between his presence and our sense of his presence on that day face to face run into his eternal arms of grace that with that final union in view let's abide in Christ today so that we can bear enduring witness to him in this world let's pray together

God you are grieved when we think hard thoughts about you doubting your care your grace compassion toward us because you know as a loving father that children are loath to come to angry fathers and so you have given us Christ that we might abide in him and be assured of your grace and favor so we can obey him and grow in our union or our communion with him so we pray for that help us as a church to daily abide in you in

Jesus name we pray this may be more than