

Abiding in The Vine – Part 3

Abiding in Christ Through Dying to Self: Empowered by the Holy Spirit

1. Brief recap from last two meetings.

- We briefly touched on when a believer receives the Holy Spirit. We went through these scriptures: **Eph. 1:13-14, Gal. 3:2,5,14, 2 Cor. 1:22, Jn. 14:16-17 (NLT/AMP)**. These passages show that a believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment they believe in Christ and receive Him as Lord, with the Spirit serving as a permanent guarantee (abiding fully). They teach that the Holy Spirit is received through faith in Christ and that Jesus promises the Holy Spirit as a permanent Helper who will be in believers forever.
- This is important because it ties in with what we also talked about which is that the Holy Spirit can help us abide in Christ.
- We dove into the allegory of abiding in the vine in **Jn. 15:1-17 (NKJV/AMP)**. We talked about how strongly Jesus was encouraging his disciples to abide in Him and how we can practically abide. **Jn. 15:1-17** is a message for believers. Those who abide in the vine will produce much fruit. Jesus also highlighted the importance of "remaining in Him." This speaks of ongoing relationship.
- We also talked about the benefits of abiding and remaining in Him (bearing much fruit) and consequences of not abiding (withering).

2. How dying to self helps us abide in Christ

- a) Let's start with this encouragement from **Rom. 8:1-5, 13 (NKJV/AMPC)**.
 - b) **Rom. 8:1-5, 13** is crucial to the "remaining in Him" and "Abiding" that we spoke of in our last study. Two very important things I want to point out in this passage:
 1. Notice in v. 4 (NKJV and others such as ESV, NIV, NASB) it says "**walk**" and (AMPC) it says "**live and move**". Most English translations render the key phrase based on the Greek verb *peripateō* (περιπατέω) as something like "*who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*". The original Greek in **Rom. 8:4** uses *peripateō* (peh-ree-pah-TEH-oh), a metaphorical term meaning "**to walk**" or "**to conduct one's life**." In biblical Greek, it often describes the habitual pattern or manner of daily living—how one orders their behavior, choices, and overall lifestyle. It is not just literal walking but a way of life. - The AMPC renders it as "*who live and move not in the ways of the flesh but in the ways of the Spirit*." This addition of "*and move*" is there to convey the comprehensive, all-encompassing nature of this **Spirit-governed life**. It draws from **Acts 17:28**—"For in Him we live and move and have our being"—where "*live and move*" describes total dependence on God for existence, activity, and every aspect of being. In the context of **Rom. 8:4** it focusing on dependence on the Holy Spirit. "**Live and Move**": Our basic existence (live). - Our actions, motions, and daily conduct (move). - Every sphere of life, from routine decisions to broader patterns of behavior. We are strongly encouraged to "*live and move*" in the ways of the Spirit. This is how we can live the abundant life Jesus spoke of in **Jn. 10:10**: "*I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (or "*to the full*"). Abundant life: a life directed not by selfish human desires (the flesh) but by the Spirit's guidance and empowerment. The abundant life isn't mere survival, material wealth, or fleeting happiness—it's a rich, overflowing existence marked by **deep peace, joy, purpose, victory over sin, fruitful relationships, and intimate fellowship with God, even amid trials**.

*Also note "*controlled by the desires of the Spirit*" in **Rom 8:5**. ~ Discuss...

2. **Rom. 8:13:** There is a very important key direction for believers in this passage that will lead to remaining in Him, abiding in Him and living the abundant life: (NKJV) "*but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*", (AMPC) "**But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever.**"
3. **Dying to self and how doing so leads to abiding in the vine and not withering.**
 - a) Before diving into all the "dying to self" scriptures, please note that **Rom. 8:13** is the answer to achieving what is in these "dying to self" passages we are going to read.
 - b) **Connection Between Dying to Self and Abiding in Christ:**

Dying to self directly enables us to abide in Christ, while self-sufficiency creates separation—like a branch fooling itself into thinking it can survive alone, hoarding nutrients it can't produce. Abiding requires vulnerability, humility, surrender, and staying rooted in Christ's words and love (**Jn. 15:4-5, 7**: "Abide in me"; **Jn. 15:9-10**: "Abide in my love").

Picture a branch tangled in weeds—those weeds are the passions and desires of the flesh as mentioned in (**Gal. 5:24**). These entanglements block the life-giving flow from the vine (Jesus). By dying to self through the Holy Spirit's power (**Rom. 8:13** "*if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body*"), we clear the pathway. This makes it far easier to remain connected to the true Vine and bear lasting fruit.

Jesus calls us to abide in Him, which means relying on Him rather than ourselves. Abiding is a daily choice—and denying self is choosing to abide.
 - c) **The Tension: Religion vs. relationship.**

"Hard Work" (Risking Legalism) vs. Spirit-Empowerment (Rooted in Relationship): "Dying to self" commands like "put to death" (**Col. 3:5**) or "deny yourself daily" (**Lk. 9:23**) can sound like exhausting toil—a gritty battle with the flesh, like Paul's cry, "What a wretched man I am!" (**Rom. 7:18-25**). What about Jesus saying, "*I will give you rest for your souls*" and "*My yoke is easy and my burden is light* (**Mat. 11:28-30**)? How does that fit into the equation of Dying to self? I believe **Rom. 8:13** offers hope with its gentle "if": a gracious invitation, not a threat.

"*By the Spirit*" infuses explosive power (Dunamis - dynamite), enabling true death to self because of relying on the Helper rather than self. Dying to self = Deeper abiding which leads to rest for your soul.
 - d) Let's dive into some "dying to self" passages and keep in mind that the "if" that is in **Rom. 8:13** "*if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body*", will help us be successful with these "dying to self" passages in our lives. If by the flesh we will certainly fail.
 - e) Dying to self: **Lk. 9:23; Jn 12:24-25; Rom. 6:6-8; 8:13; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Phil. 3:7-11; Col. 3:5;**
1 Pet. 2:24 ...and all these scriptures when put into practice with the help of the Holy Spirit will help us abide in the vine and remain in Him. – I felt that **Jn. 12:25** needed some commentary.
 - f) **Believe's Bible Commentary on Jn. 12:25** "*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*" - "Many people think that the important things in life are food, clothing, and pleasure. They live for these things. But in thus loving their lives, they fail to realize that the soul is more important than the body. By neglecting their soul's welfare, they lose their lives. On the other hand, there are those who count all things loss for Christ. To serve Him, they forego things highly prized among men. These are the people who will keep their lives for eternal life. To hate one's life means to love Christ more than one loves his own interests."

Charles Spurgeon Devotional

"It is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, 'Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of his children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus.' All these are thoughts about self, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self and onto Christ.

We cannot ignore the reality of spiritual warfare. Satan does not want us to abide in Christ; he wants us focused on flesh-driven life rather than a Spirit-led one. If there were no battle, Scripture would not strongly encourage us with passages like:

1 Tim. 6:12 "*Fight the good fight of the faith [in the conflict with evil]; take hold of the eternal life.*"

Heb. 12:1-2 "*run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus.*"

1 Cor. 9:24-27 "*run that you may obtain it.*"

2 Tim. 4:7 "*I have finished the race.*"

Phil. 3:14 "*press on toward the goal.*"

Yet we must avoid two extremes:

Hyper-grace, which pretends there is no fight at all; and legalism, which has us striving in our own flesh to keep the law. True abiding comes through a Spirit-led life of surrender—not frantic striving to stay connected but remaining in Him through continual yielding.

This brings us full circle to **Rom. 8:13**: "*but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*" This yielding to the Spirit helps us abide in Him and abiding produces joy that is noted in (Ps. 37:4) "*Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart*".

Homework: Reread **Jn. 15:1-17 (NKJV/AMP)** and then dive into the full context of these passages:

Lk. 9:23; Jn 12:24-25; Rom. 6:6-8; 8:13; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Phil. 3:7-11; Col. 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:24 and read **Rom. 8:13** before each one. Also, while reading through these passages see how they connect with abiding in the Vine.

Next study: Self-denial and rule keeping vs relationship: surrender and identity in Christ through union by The Holy Spirit **Col. 2:20 - 3:17**.

Deeper Study (Below is context pulled from several commentaries)

"Dying to self" is a profound biblical theme that captures the call to surrender our sinful, self-centered nature to live fully for Christ. Below is a curated list of key drawn from across the New Testament. I've included brief context notes for each to highlight its connection to the theme. These verses emphasize crucifixion of the old self, denial of personal desires, and fruitful new life in Christ.

Scripture	Quote	Context
Luke 9:23	"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'"	Jesus' direct call to discipleship during His ministry, stressing ongoing self-denial as essential for following Him, not a one-time act.
John 12:24-25	"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."	Spoken by Jesus near the end of His earthly life, using agricultural imagery to illustrate sacrificial death leading to spiritual fruitfulness.
Romans 6:6-8	"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him."	Paul's explanation of baptism and union with Christ's death/resurrection, portraying "dying to self" as freedom from sin's power.
Galatians 2:20	"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."	Paul's personal testimony of transformation, showing dying to self enables Christ's indwelling life through faith.
Galatians 5:24	"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."	In the context of walking by the Spirit vs. the flesh, this verse links dying to self with belonging to Christ and freedom from sinful impulses.

Scripture	Quote	Context
Colossians 3:5	"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."	Paul's practical exhortation to believers in Colossae, urging active mortification of sin as part of heavenly-minded living.
Philippians 3:7-8	"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."	Paul's reflection on his former achievements, revaluing them as worthless compared to intimacy with Christ—a mindset shift in dying to self.
1 Peter 2:24	"He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.'"	Peter's encouragement to suffering believers, connecting Christ's atonement to our freedom to die to sin and embrace righteous living.
Romans 8:13	"For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."	Paul's contrast between fleshly living (leading to death) and Spirit-empowered mortification, emphasizing reliance on the Holy Spirit.
Matthew 16:24-25	"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.'"	Parallel to Luke 9:23, spoken after Peter's confession, underscoring the paradox of losing life to truly find it in Christ.

These verses collectively paint a picture of dying to self as both a decisive act at conversion and a daily rhythm of surrender.

Deep Dive: What "Dying to Self" Means Practically for the Believer

Theologically, "dying to self" is rooted in the believer's union with Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4, NIV: "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life"). It's not self-annihilation or masochism but a transformative exchange: the "old self"—our sin-dominated, self-exalting nature (Ephesians 4:22, NIV: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires")—is crucified so Christ can live vibrantly through us.

(Galatians 2:20). This echoes Jesus' own path: He "humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8, NIV), modeling surrender for our redemption.

Practically, for the believer, this means shifting from autonomy to dependence:

- Renouncing Self-Reliance: It's letting go of the illusion that we control our lives apart from God. As Jesus taught, clinging to "this life" (self-preservation, comfort, reputation) leads to loss, while releasing it yields eternal gain (John 12:25).
- Mortifying Sin: Actively confronting and "putting to death" habits like pride, lust, or greed (Colossians 3:5; Romans 8:13), not through willpower alone but by the Spirit's power—recognizing sin's roots in self-worship.
- Embracing Christ's Priorities: Daily choices reflect His lordship, like forgiving enemies (as in Luke 9:23's "follow me") or serving others selflessly (Mark 10:45, NIV: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many").
- Fruitful Paradox: Like the seed in John 12:24, death to self isn't barren—it's multiplicative, producing character (Galatians 5:22-23), ministry impact, and joy in God's presence (Psalm 16:11, NIV: "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence").

In context, this isn't abstract mysticism; it's the heartbeat of New Testament ethics. Paul, writing to real communities facing persecution or cultural pressures, frames it as empowerment for holy living (2 Corinthians 5:15, NIV: "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again"). It's both positional (accomplished in Christ's work) and progressive (ongoing sanctification).

Putting It into Practice Without Falling into Legalism

The danger of "dying to self" is twisting it into a checklist of dos and don'ts—legalism—where effort becomes the measure of spirituality, breeding guilt or pride (Colossians 2:20-23, NIV warns against "self-made rules" that lack true power). Jesus critiqued this in the Pharisees, who "neglect the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23, NIV). The antidote? Anchor everything in grace and relationship, as dying to self flows from Christ's finished work, not our striving (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God").

Remember, progress isn't linear—setbacks are opportunities to reaffirm faith in Christ's sufficiency (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"). If legalistic tendencies creep in (e.g., measuring holiness by performance), return to the gospel: You're already dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11). Dying to self, done right, liberates you to love boldly, free from self's tyranny. If this resonates deeply, consider meditating on Galatians 2:20 this week—let it reframe your day.

And let's go even deeper.....

Practical Meaning for the Believer and Putting It into Practice Without Legalism

Delving deeper, dying to self isn't ascetic self-loathing or Stoic endurance; it's the glad renunciation of illusions that choke joy—the mirage that I am the center, sustainer, and endpoint of existence. Biblically, it's the outworking of *imago Dei* restored: created for union (Genesis 1:27), fractured by autonomy (Genesis 3:6), redeemed to reflect Christ (Romans 8:29). Practically, this manifests in the mundane: yielding the last word in an argument (echoing Philippians 2:3-4's "consider others better"), fasting from social media to hunger for God's voice (Psalm 42:1), or stewarding work as worship rather than ladder-climbing (Colossians 3:23). It's the slow alchemy where self's dross—fear of man, lust for control—melts under Calvary's heat, unveiling capacities for empathy, creativity, and boldness we never knew.

Yet, as you noted, implementation risks legalism's snare: a performance treadmill where "dying" becomes another metric for self-justification, inverting the gospel (Galatians 3:3: "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"). The safeguard? Anchor in already-not-yet grace: You're positionally dead (Romans 6:11), progressively pruning (John 15:2), and eternally secure (John 10:28-29).

Tying in John 15:1-8: How Dying to Self Helps One Abide in Christ (and Vice Versa)

John 15:1-8's vineyard tableau is no mere metaphor—it's Jesus' Upper Room legacy (John 13-17), spoken hours before betrayal, imprinting abiding as the antidote to orphan-hearted isolation. "I am the true vine" (v. 1) contrasts Israel's failed fruitfulness (Isaiah 5:1-7); the Father-gardener prunes (*kathairō*: cleanses/cuts) for abundance, but fruitless branches face excision—not vindictiveness, but mercy's severity to restore purpose.

Deeper linkage: Dying to self facilitates abiding because self-sufficiency is the primal disconnect—the branch's delusion of independence, hoarding nutrients it can't produce. Abiding (*menō*) demands vulnerability: remaining in Christ's words (v. 7), love (v. 9-10), and answered prayer as overflow. Self-death clears the sapline: Imagine a branch entangled in weeds (passions, per Galatians 5:24)—it starves the vine's flow. By "hating life in this world" (John 12:25), we uproot those, yielding to the Father's shears. Reciprocally, abiding sustains dying: Immersed in the vine, self's clamor quiets; we "ask whatever" (v. 7) for pruning grace, bearing fruit that evidences discipleship (v. 8)—not self-manufactured, but Christ-expressed (John 15:5: "apart from me you can do nothing").

Practically elaborated: In relational friction, abide by reciting v. 4 ("Remain in me"); die to self by releasing offense, praying for the offender (Matthew 5:44). Over seasons, this cultivates orchard-deep roots: Seasons of barrenness? Trust the Gardener's cut (Hebrews 12:11: "No discipline seems pleasant... but painful. Later, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness"). The synergy? Dying loosens soil for abiding's roots; abiding nourishes dying's harvest. It's cyclical communion, glorifying the Father through lives that whisper, "Not I, but the Vine."

The Tension of "Hard Work" vs. Spirit-Empowerment in Romans 8:13

Your insight pierces the paradox: Commands like "put to death" (Colossians 3:5) or "deny yourself daily" (Luke 9:23) evoke ascetic toil, a gritty wrestling match with the flesh (as in Romans 7:18-25's "wretched man" cry). Yet Romans 8:13 reframes: The "if" is conditional invitation, not threat—"by the Spirit" (pneumati) injects dynamite (dynamis, same root) into our agency. It's not effortless passivity (we do the putting) nor Pelagian sweat (Spirit authors the capacity). Deeper: This echoes Exodus' manna—gathered daily by human hands, yet heaven-sourced. The "hard work" is the friction of incarnation: Spirit-wind billows our sails, but we hoist them; He ignites the fire, but we fan it (2 Timothy 1:6). Flesh-life? A slow suicide by self-strangulation. Spirit-life? Vivid co-resurrection, where misdeeds wither not from willpower's whip but Love's gaze.

This tension guards against extremes: Hyper-grace ignores the fight (1 Timothy 6:12: "fight the good fight"); duty-ism orphans the Helper. Instead, it's Trinitarian dance—Father prunes, Son models, Spirit empowers—turning drudgery to delight (Psalm 37:4). When verses weigh heavy, pause: "Spirit, this death is Yours to wield in me." Abiding blooms here: Not striving to remain, but remaining through yielded struggle, as branches sway in the Vine's unforced rhythm.