

“What it Means to be Reformed”; Session # 50 – “Perseverance – Abiding in Christ”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School Class on August 30th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall.

John Owen says: “The saints weigh their own righteousness in the balance, and find it wanting.... In particular: they daily weigh all their particular actions in the balance, and find them wanting, as to any such completeness as, upon their own account, to be accepted with God. “Oh!” says a saint, “if I had nothing to commend me unto God but this prayer, this duty, this conquest of a temptation, wherein I myself see so many failings, so much imperfection, could I appear with any boldness before him? Shall I, then, piece up a garment of righteousness out of my best duties? Ah! it is all as a defiled cloth,” Isaiah 64:6. These thoughts accompany them in all their duties, in their best and most choice performances: — “Lord, what am I in my best estate? How little suitableness unto thy holiness is in my best duties! O spare me, in reference to the best thing that ever I did in my life!” Nehemiah 13:22. When a man who lives upon convictions has got some enlargements in duties, some conquest over a sin or temptation, he hugs himself, like Micah when he had got a Levite to be his priest: now surely it shall be well with him, now God will bless him: his heart is now at ease; he has peace in what he has done. But he who has communion with Christ, when he is highest in duties of sanctification and holiness, is clearest in the apprehension of his own unprofitableness, and rejects every thought that might arise in his heart of setting his peace in them, or upon them. He says to his soul, “Do these things seem something to thee? Alas! thou hast to do with an infinitely righteous God, who looks through and through all that vanity, which thou art but little acquainted withal; and should he deal with thee according to thy best works, thou must perish.” - Vol. 2 of his Works, P. 188, Of Communion with the Son Jesus Christ.

Evangelical obedience is an obedience which depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ for grace to do what is right.

John 15: 1-5 – “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” “Abide in Me, and I in you.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” “I am the vine, you are the branches.” “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Bearing fruit unto God is related to related to keeping the commandments of God while abiding in Christ’s love. This is seen in John 15: 9-12 – “As the Father loved Me, I also have 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.” “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full.” “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

You will notice that our Lord tells us what it means to abide in His love, which is unchanging towards those persons who have trusted in Him for salvation. It is that we would keep His commandments even as He kept His Father’s commandments and abode in His love. Obviously, Christ kept all of the commandments of His Father perfectly. It also should be obvious to a Christian that they do not keep them perfectly, but in Christ they will make progress in righteousness and holiness, striving towards that the standard of perfection all of their days. They will persevere in their faith in this regard, knowing that by the grace of Christ they will

make progress, and realizing the joy that it will bring to Christ's heart and ours when we do keep them. Matthew 25: 23,25, and 29