

# Continue

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of continuing in Christ's love as the source of joy, strength, and obedience in the believer's life.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 7:7, John 15:9-10, John 16:27, Romans 8:37, Romans 9:5, Ephesians 5:25, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 4:19

**Topics:** "Christ's Love", "Abiding Faith"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the importance of abiding in the love of Christ, emphasizing that continuing in His love is different from focusing on our love for Him. The Spirit encourages us in Christ's love, which begets love in our hearts, leading to joy and progress in Him. By abiding in Christ's love, we can navigate through doctrinal and ecclesiastical challenges, fulfilling other instructions given to the redeemed. The love of Christ, both collectively for believers and individually, is a present and victorious love that we are urged to cherish and continue in, finding fullness of joy and satisfaction despite present sufferings.

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## Transcript

Jottings from an address on John 10:9-12

A servant of Christ, who is now with the Lord, once remarked, "Abide in the love of Christ! That will constrain you to live to His glory as nothing else can." Yes, the secret lies there, in continuing in His love, and that is vastly different from occupation with our love to Him. The oft repeated exhortation to "love Christ"--to "have affection for Him,"--has turned souls in upon themselves, and hindered their joy and progress in Christ. It is to be noticed that the Spirit encourages us in Christ's love, and it is thus that love to Him is increased, but He never exhorts the members of Christ's body to love Him. It is His love which begets love in their hearts. Law demanded love, but failed to produce it. The triumphant banner of Divine love, lifted high in resurrection by the Son of God, who died for us and rose again, tells of a victory gained in this respect when all else failed--"His banner over me was love."

To "abide in Christ" and "to continue in His love" (John 15:9) are necessary words, to be heeded by us in these days of doctrinal departure from the truth and ecclesiastical departure from the order of the house of God; hastening on, as they do, the apostasy expressly foretold in the Word of God. We cannot put right what is going wrong, but those who are saved by grace and sealed by the Spirit can abide in Christ and in His love. There are other instructions also given to the redeemed, but as continuing in these, the others will be fulfilled also. We are told to continue in the faith, to continue in the grace of God, to continue in

prayer, to continue in what we have learned, to continue in the goodness of God; and, since the grace of God has justified us freely through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and since it now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Him, the question is raised in Romans 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" "Far be the thought," for with the One who loves us we have died to sin, and that love which led Him to die for us constrains us to live to Him, who died and rose again, to Him who is now at the right hand of God.

### The Love of Christ

It is in His love we are exhorted to continue in John 15:9. It is a present and victorious love! He loved us, when upon the cross He suffered for our many sins, but He loves us still exalted upon the throne where our sins are remembered no more. If we think of those who are saved in a collective sense, the verse referred to tells us that He loves us even as the Father loves Him; and again we read, "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end" (13:1); also, "Christ loved us and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. 5:1). It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that those who respond to His word and continue in His great love for them instinctively assemble together according to God's word. That keeps them bright and happy in the things of God! I could soon put a fire out without a bucket of water! just by taking that glowing coal, putting it by itself, and then another, and so on. The fire will quickly go out then! We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as is the custom of some; but so much the more as Christ's coming draws nigh are we to get together.

There is also the corporate sense in which Christ's love is ours; that which He has for the assembly as His body, and His bride. The surpassing preciousness of this is often foreshadowed in the Old Testament, but the Spirit of God tells us that it held back nothing so that we might become His--not even Himself; for Christ loved the Assembly and gave Himself for it (see Eph 5:25-32). This special and peculiar love then is also our present portion, this which is abiding and unchanging, in which we are to continue as those who form part of His body and His bride.

Then the individual aspect of the love of Christ is also made known to the believer, making him sing with gladness as its sweetness fills his rejoicing heart,

"Oh, Jesus, Lord, who loved me like to Thee?"

(That hymn was written thus in the singular, but was altered for assembly use to the plural.) And as he looks on to the glorious goal to which his Saviour is bringing him, on the ground of His atoning sufferings at Calvary, the grateful song continues and exclaims,

"Myself the prize and travail of Thy soul!"

Yes, the love of Christ for each one individually is a fact to be cherished in the heart with holy confidence. We must not lose the sense of His love for us each one individually. It was what John rested in at all times, for he opens his Gospel by showing us the Son in the bosom of the Father (1:18), he afterwards shows us in chapter 13 a disciple in the bosom of the Son, and speaks of himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." He does not style himself "The disciple who loved Jesus!" No, he abides in the joy that Jesus loves him. How different, as we have said, to speaking of loving Christ, or having affection for Christ. No, it is in the love of Jesus he finds strength and cheer: Paul, too, approximates closely to John when he says, "The Son of God . . . loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). That is the constraining power in which we

are to continue, always remembering whose love it is the love of no less a Person than the great and glorious Son of God "the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen" (Rom. 9:5, N.Tr.). The more we learn of His greatness and glory, the more will His love be enhanced to our adoring hearts, as we think of such an One stooping to suffering, shame and death to make us His for ever.

It may help us in this important matter if we inquire, Can anyone tell the measure of His love? Yes, if they can measure the Father's love for the Son; for He says, "As the Father has loved Me so have I loved you." That is the measure. It is a measureless measure. It is infinite like Himself.

Can anyone show the manifestation of His great love for us us? The Spirit of God has done so. Look at the cross of Calvary! See the Son of God, our precious Saviour, hanging there!--"While we were yet sinners Christ died for us--He gave Himself for us--"Hereby we have known love, because He has laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16 N.Tr.)--There we see the full manifestation of the love of Christ. What more could it do to make its fullness known to our hearts?

What, it may be asked, is the motive of such love as has been made known to us? There can be but one answer to the question--Love! It found its motive in itself. He loved because He loved. This is indicated in the words of Deuteronomy 7:7, "The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you" for any merit or greatness beyond others, "but because the Lord loved you." God is love, and His love has been set upon us in Christ Jesus, and nothing can separate us from it. Not only was there no merit or worthiness in us to call out His love, but we were lost sinners. Yet He loved us because He loved us. His love found its motive in itself, and when He has us around Him in the home prepared, then His love shall be satisfied.

We may well say, "It is good for us to be here!" and the Lord Jesus has said, "Continue ye in My love." Even though it cannot be measured, we may know the love of Christ which nevertheless passes knowledge (Eph. 3:19), and we can behold with worshipping hearts the manifestation of it at the cross, rejoicing that its motive is found in itself and not in us magnifying, however, the perfection and glory of it in that such undone sinners as ourselves should be its objects. Eternal glory to His holy Name!

"His faithfulness, for ever sure,

For endless ages shall endure:

His love's unchangeably the same,

And as enduring as His Name."

To continue here, then, is to be our present portion, even as He has said to us. It is one thing to be exhorted to "continue" in a vague sort of way, but it is quite another to be encouraged to continue as something positive, something definite, and that is what the Lord does when He tells us to continue in His love.

Full Joy

Nor can the sufferings of this present time rob us of the blessedness of our present portion as we abide in this. When Paul found himself in tribulation, distress, persecution and other trials, he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and the answer shows that He knew not only could nothing sever us from it, but that "in these things" we are victorious, yea, and more than that, for it says, In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Yes, having joy and satisfaction

amidst the sufferings we are more than conquerors "in" them all, not by being taken out of them.

The Lord Jesus continued in His Father's love even when sorest trials pressed upon Him. He remained as ever in the bosom of the Father. So He said to us, "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. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:10-11). Nothing moved Him from His sweet retreat. Nothing could rob Him of the Father's love. He kept His Father's commandments, and as we answer to those He has given to us we shall continue in His love. We shall find in them instruction which preserves us, paths in which our steps may securely tread, channels for the new nature, which every true child of God possesses, to flow freely in. His commandments are not grievous to such, but become the means of keeping us in fullness of joy, with His own joy too remaining in us, as He said.

I remember a saint being in such a state of depression through severe trial, that she thought God did not love her. I asked her if she knew anyone who had lived in this world whom God loved and loved with an infinite love. "Oh, yes," she replied, "The Lord Jesus." Then, I asked, "Did any other suffer as He suffered?" "No," she answered. "And yet," I said, "He was loved perfectly, and so are you." At all times and under all circumstances we are to continue in His love, brethren, and then, with His joy in us, our joy will indeed be full.

When John and Peter received word from Mary Magdalene of the empty tomb, John uses the very strongest word to express Christ's love for Him--the disciple whom Jesus "dearly loved,"--and he outran Peter, reaching the sepulchre, where their beloved Lord had lain, first. Does not this indicate that the sense of Christ's love in our hearts will make us run well in the ways that are pleasing to God? The Lord also uses the strong word for love when He speaks of His Father's love to us, as He says, "The Father Himself dearly loves you because ye have dearly loved Me and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:27). In chapter 17 we read of the Son saying to His Father, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (v. 22). How vast! How infinite! And yet it is assuredly true.

The Son of the Father loves us, the Father Himself loves us, and though we are not exhorted in the New Testament to love the Father or the Son, nevertheless the Lord says to us--after speaking of His own love in which we are to continue--"This is My commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). We are exhorted to this because it is necessary for us. Divine love produces love, and it is the desire of our Lord Jesus Christ that love should flow freely from our hearts to one another, so He has given us a commandment as to it lest anything should be allowed to check its activities. "Philadelphia" means love of the brethren--"we know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14)--to Philadelphia Christ says, "I have loved thee," and we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Divine Love produces love--love to Him and love one to another--and secures response to that word, "Let brotherly love continue."

Is there any limitation given, any measure set to the love wherewith we are to love one another? Well, He says, "As I have loved you." That is a measureless measure as we have already shown, for He loves us as the Father loves Him, and we are to love after that manner and character--as He has loved us! Yet, He has not spoken of something which is altogether beyond us, for it is the outcome of keeping His commandments, continuing in His love, having His joy in us and our joy full. True was the word of the servant of Christ which we cited at the beginning, "Abide in the love of Christ! that will constrain you to live to His glory as nothing else can." And to that word we may add, "In fullness of joy!" May continuance mark

us then, remembering His words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

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