

March 18, 2022

THE PLUMBLINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS



CROSSPOINTE
CHURCH

Join us for Revival
with David Crowe

MARCH 20 | 9AM, 11AM, 6PM
MARCH 21-23 | 7PM
2460 PRUDEN BLVD

ARE WE RESPONSIBLE?

D. Bruce Barnes

In *A Soldier's Confidences with God*, Giosué Borsi says, "The great thought, the great concern, the great anxiety of men is to restrict, as much as possible, the limits of their own responsibility." Admittedly, one might feel far less anxiety if able to legitimately cast-off personal responsibility and, by doing so, be relieved of accountability to someone else. As it concerns salvation, John 15:1-17 appears to make the case that the believer is answerable as it

involves a relationship to Christ. Indeed, this passage strongly indicates that one who has accepted Christ as Savior is responsible for abiding in that relationship.

Within these seventeen verses, Christ uses various forms of the Greek verb *meno* (to remain, abide) eleven times. He begins in verse four, saying, "Abide in me." The verb mood is imperative and places the responsibility of the one in Christ to remain in such a state. To deny the imperative's significance is to disregard the word entirely and the mood Jesus Himself chose to use. *Dana and Mantey's Greek Grammar* states that the imperative is used when it is "conditioned upon the agent's response—being volitionally possible" (166). In this case, abiding in or remaining in Christ is volitionally possible by the one in Christ. It is not only possible, but because Christ uses an Aorist tense for the imperative, the "abiding" is simple in kind of action.

(Cont'd., p2)

ARE WE RESPONSIBLE? (Cont'd.)

That means that nothing has to be done to remain once the connection is made with the vine; the emphasis for the believer is simply “Abide.” However, if one can remain in Christ by merely abiding, it is equally viable for one not to remain because they would personally choose not to abide.

Interestingly enough, the subsequent two uses of *meno* by Christ sets up this very possibility. Jesus uses conditional statements and conditional promises related to the believer’s abiding state. He says in verse four, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” The words “except” used in the King James Version combine two Greek words (*ean ma*), which indicates the conditional nature of what is about to follow. It suggests that the mood of possibility (subjunctive) will be introduced. A condition (*ean*–“if”) is connected since a subjunctive presents the potential of action and not its assurance. Thus, if the branch is not presently abiding in the vine, it is not bearing fruit. Conversely, the understanding of the condition is that if the branch is currently abiding in the vine, it is bearing fruit. Jesus reveals that there must be a continual abiding for a continued relationship of actual, spiritual fruit-bearing.

Just in these three uses of “abiding” in John 15:4, Jesus substantiates that there is some measure of responsibility believers hold for abiding in the relationship. His use of the imperative establishes this. Additionally, Christ emphasizes the possibility of a continuing state of fruitfulness as one acts responsibly by continuing that relationship with Him. There is no doubt that the vine is fruitful; the branch’s fruitfulness, however, depends on its continuing to abide.

VAFWB ON THE CALENDAR

- MARCH 18-19: Northern Virginia Men's Retreat at Rapidan Baptist Camp
- MARCH 20: PR Director, AM Service, First FWB Church, Richmond
- MARCH 27: GO Training at Great Bridge FWB Church
- MARCH 30: PR Director, Pulpit Revival Service, Hope FWB Church, Plymouth, NC
- APRIL 3-6: PR Director, Forgiveness Conference, FWB Church of Roanoke
- APRIL 8: Southwest Virginia Minister's Conference, Central FWB Church, Norton, VA
- APRIL 9: East Wise Quarterly Conference
- APRIL 10 (Palm Sunday): PR Director, AM Service, First FWB Church, Richmond
- APRIL 17 (Easter): PR Director, AM Service, First FWB Church, Richmond
- APRIL 24-27: PR Director, Forgiveness Conference, Woodland Heights FWB Church, Martinsville
- APRIL 29: John Wheeler Annual Association Meeting
- MAY 1: PR Director, AM Service and Baby Dedication, Faith FWB Church, Wytheville
- MAY 2: Tidewater Minister's Conference, Providence FWB Church, Hampton
- MAY 7: Northern Virginia Conference
- MAY 28: Southwest Virginia, West Wise Conference