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John 15:1 - 8

Let us look especially at verse 7, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

How is it that people become Christians and somewhere along the way they lose strength and fall back? What causes that? There are young people who chooses the Lord and then after a while it fizzles out and there is nothing left. So too with some older people.

We find the answer in this verse - we must abide in the Lord. It is wonderful if God's Word abides in you.

When Joshua took over from Moses the Lord spoke to Joshua to take heed to God's Word. Joshua obeyed and followed the Lord faithfully throughout his life. He hid the Word of the Lord in his heart.

God's Word needs to abide in you continually and His Words should be on our lips. No matter what others speak but when you speak it should be as from the mouth of God for God's Word abides in you.

Some girls do not have God's Word in their heart but continually think about boys. They cannot sleep because of the immoral thoughts that fill their mind.

Here we also read Jesus saying "you are clean because of the Words I have spoken to you". His Word is a cleansing agent.

If you do not make progress spiritually then it is because God's Word do not abide in you. If God's Word abides in you, you will never be lukewarm or lose strength. You will only go from strength to strength like Joshua.

There was a congregation that was very alive. One Sunday the minister noticed that there were empty chairs and the following Sunday even fewer people attended. Previously it had been full. Slowly the congregation got smaller. So he called the elders of the church, because he was concerned. He said they should seek God's face once a week and get up early in the morning for a month or 2. But nothing changed. Then one day one elder came and said it doesn't help, and they are tired getting up so early, they should rather stop. The minister said NO. From now on they will get up early every morning to pray and cry to God, asking God what the problem is that the Holy Spirit could not work. Then one day this deacon got up and said that there was a sin he had not confessed. He had a friend who got sick unto death. The friend asked this deacon to sell his cattle, when he had died, and invest the money so that his wife and family can live off the interest. After he died the deacon did as the deceased had asked but took a bit of the money to repay himself for all the trouble and expenses he had gone to in organising all this. He cried and said 'Brothers, I am a thief and was not faithful. I am the curse in your midst that God could not work. I confess my sin.' The following Sundays more and more people came. God started working again."

Sometimes we cannot discern between God's voice and our own ideas. God's Word says in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If His Word abides in you then you will be able to discerns what is from God and what is from yourself.

Today should be like judgement day in our lives for His Word judges us even today. If we judge ourselves we will not be judged (1Cor 11:31).

On 18 April 1942, Jacob de Shazer, an athiest, was captured in the war with others. Two were shot. One died of hunger. For months while in prison, he wondered why the Japanese hated them so much and he them. Then he remembered how many years before he had met up with some Christians. When he thought of this, he asked the prison guards to organise a Bible for him. The others laughed and thought it was a joke and threatened that he'd get into trouble. But he kept asking for a Bible. A year and a half later, May 1944, a guard threw in a Bible and said he would take it away after 3 weeks, which he did. And dr Shazer never saw it again. But he had read it and gave his life to the Lord. Years later he and his wife and child went to Japan as missionaries. He had had the Bible for only 3 weeks - and it changed his life.

The Word of God is not like reading a newspaper. His words will judge you. God's Word should be alive to us

and direct us throughout the day. God's Word should be our instructor and give us direction. If you do that God will prosper you in all your ways and give you life. God's Word says that man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deut 8:3).

As the body cannot survive without food so spiritually we cannot survive without the Word of God. His Word is our daily sustenance.

God's Word not only heals your spirit but even your body for some diseases are caused by a sick, starved spirit.

We've spoken about God's word in general but He even speaks to each one of us individually.

If you claim to be a child of God, test yourself whether you bear good fruit. When the Lord comes and looks for good fruit and finds none He will cut you down and you will wither and eventually be thrown into the fire. Jesus wants to reach out to other people through you. He wants to use you.

Any shop-owner takes stock from time to time to see whether he is making a profit. If he sees that he does not make a profit he would be a fool to continue.

So too spiritually we need to take stock of our lives and our service for the Lord. If we are not making progress then we must search for the cause. Rather stop than play church. Remove that which hinders the spirit of God.