

Abide in Him

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September 2009

Published by **visionone**

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We have found ourselves in an interesting season. After a time of economic prosperity in the western world, the tide has turned and many who have been naturally very capable people have become fearful and unsure of what the future may hold for them. When times are good we are confident. But when the situation changes and we find ourselves in a difficult and challenging environment, we may lose our peace.

However we read in the book of Hebrews that we are not to cast away our 'confidence that has great reward'. Heb 10:35. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul said that the kingdom of God is 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit'. Rom 14:17. Therefore, we need to think differently in difficult times because if we belong to His kingdom, we can respond in faith. We can live in the love of God as He pours it out to us. It is futile to place our confidence in our own ability, but there is great reward when we put our trust in Him.

There are three absolutes in the Scripture concerning the Lord. In John's Gospel and in his first letter, we learn that God is Spirit, love and light. John 4:24, 1 John 1:5, 4:8. Love



describes the essence of God. Jesus said, 'If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. For by this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Abide in my love.' John 15:7-9. If we abide in Him, we are to abide in His love. It is comforting to know that as we abide in Him, Jesus also actively works to keep us in His care. He prayed to the Father regarding His disciples, 'While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name, which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition.' John 17:12.

We cannot find the love of God in the world. When God's love is poured out upon us, we receive the three components of His love which are His righteousness, peace and joy. The emphasis here is on His righteousness, His peace and His joy. It is not a righteousness, peace and joy that we manufacture ourselves. Paul stated that 'the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us'. Rom 5:5. It is significant to note that the correct translation of this verse is through the Holy Spirit and not by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord pours out His love to you and to me but His love is not an amorphous 'thing'. If I look at a tree outside and enjoy the ambience of God's creation, this pleasant experience does not equate with the peace of God. I might be honouring God's creation, but I have not necessarily received His peace. And so it is with His love. It is real and substantial. Likewise, Jesus told His disciples that after a time of grief, they would see Him again and rejoice and no one would take their joy away from them. John 16:22. As we abide in His love, His joy becomes our joy. When Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you', He was not saying that we will always feel peaceful. John 14:27. After He rose from the dead and walked into the room with the disciples, Jesus said, 'Peace be with you'. John 20:21. I doubt whether they all felt relaxed, happy, or settled in spirit at this time but He still gave them His peace. In the same way, His righteousness is a gift to us. It gives us somewhere to walk, something to do, and justification as we do it. In the first letter of John, we are told that God is bigger than our hearts when our hearts condemn us. 1 John 3:20. We are justified as long as we receive His love, His peace and His joy. The book of Hebrews states that Jesus was anointed with the 'oil of gladness' above His fellows. Heb 1:9. As He pours out His love upon us, we are also being anointed with the oil of gladness above our companions.




In the Gospel of John, we read much about 'abiding'. Jesus is recorded as saying 'I am the true vine. My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch that does not bear fruit He takes it away. But every branch that bears fruit He prunes it so that it might bear more fruit.' John 15:1. Sometimes, a plant may be pruned right down to its stump which will cause it to go into hibernation for a season. At other times, the plant may only be tip-pruned to allow it to keep growing. On other occasions, the pruning may be somewhere in between these two extremes. If we have borne fruit, we can be sure that He is going to prune us. Jesus then said, 'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.' John 15:4-6. We should rejoice if He is pruning us as we abide in Him, because we can be sure that new growth will come and we will be fruitful again.

Jesus told us to abide in Him and allow His words to abide in us. John 15:7. We abide in His love by abiding in the word that He continues to bring to each one of us. Many who are in business will need to understand

the season, and find wisdom by abiding in His word. Some may need to prune hard; but for others, less pruning will be required. We each need to know the season and judge 'righteous judgements'. We must not judge by economic indicators alone, although we certainly need to consider them. By knowing the joy of the Lord, we can rejoice in tribulation. Of course, we do not have peace as the world gives. That would not make any sense. If we are in trouble, why would we feel at peace? But peace comes in a word. Jesus told us to let His words abide in us. John 15: 7. As we seek the Lord and receive His love, we will receive His word and we must abide in it. This means we stay there; we remain there. As we abide in His love, He will give us His righteousness and then we will receive His peace and His joy. Righteousness, peace and joy reside with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and they are being poured out upon us. But the world cannot receive these things. If we do not cast away our confidence but abide in His love, we will bring forth fruit.

The Lord will prune us with a view to the 'winter' ahead. In a sense, the whole world is being pruned and it is affecting everyone, because the rain falls on the just and the unjust. Matt 5:45. We are being pruned along with the economy of the world, and yet, our hearts are filled with joy because growth is coming. There is no contradiction here. We can see His pruning hand in both the micro and macro



sense. The Lord is working with us individually and collectively as congregations of people. But He is also working in the whole world. These things are not at odds with each other. The Lord is speaking to each one of us and He is pouring out His love upon us.

If you are facing difficulty in your business or your life generally at this time, the key to success may not be in expansion. It may be in pruning and contraction. In a grapevine, the leader vine must be pruned back on its trellis or it will keep growing and not bear fruit. If the Lord is pruning you, rejoice! Abide in His love. No one can take your joy from you. Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' John 14:27. Abide in His joy. Let Him anoint you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. Heb 1:9. Nothing will be lost. Not one hair of your head will perish. Luke 21:18. As the prophet Isaiah said, 'No weapon that is formed against you will prosper'. Isa 54:17. We can abide in His love, knowing His righteousness, joy and peace regardless of what is happening around us. We remember the words of Jesus, 'These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full'. John 15:11.