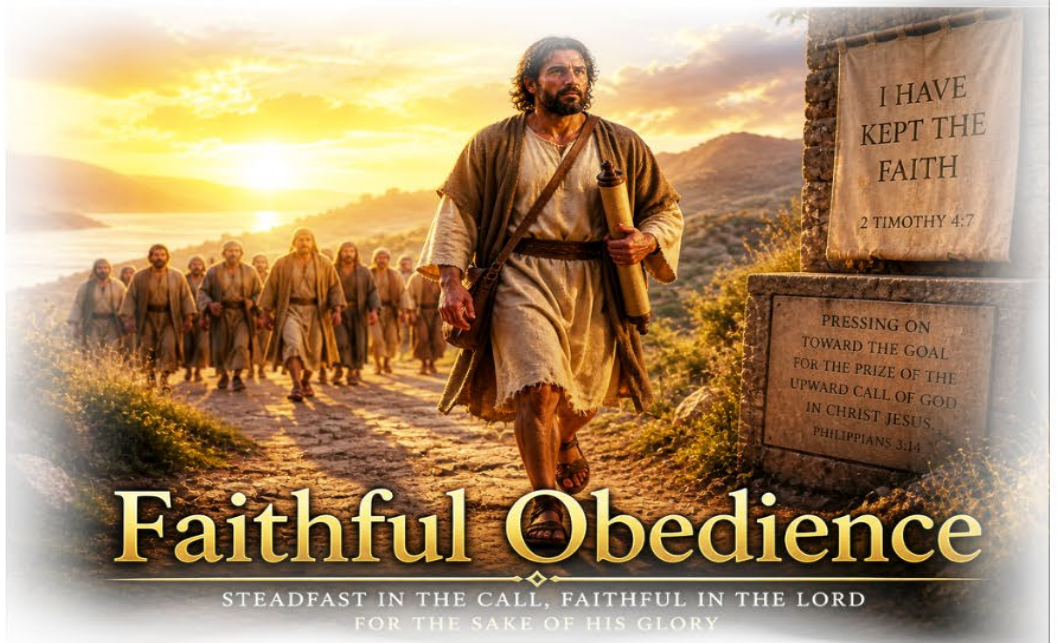
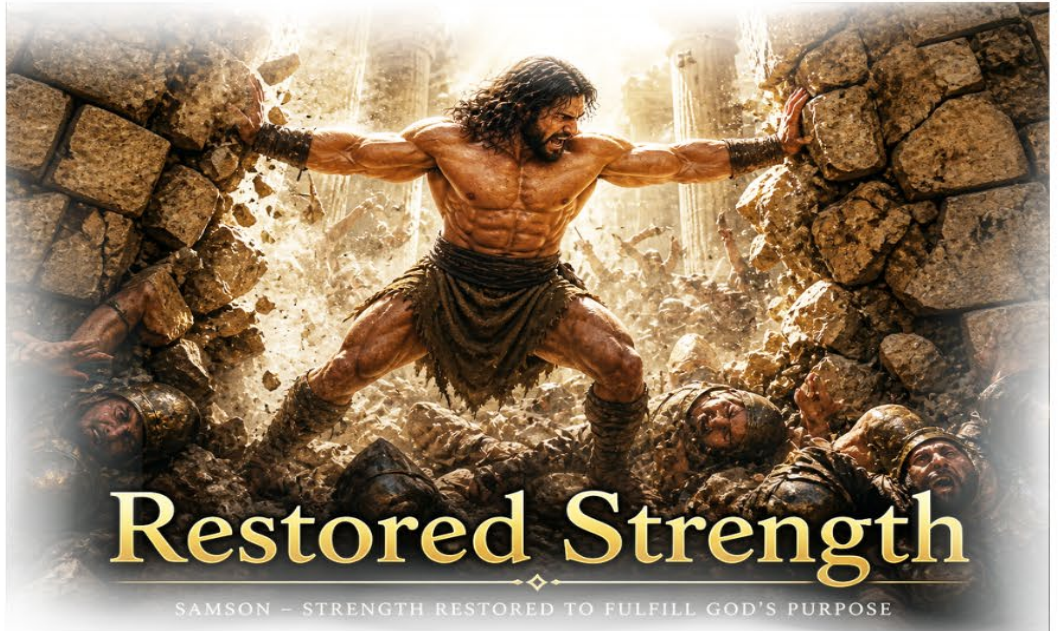


WILLINGNESS AND READINESS

YOUR TIME IS NOW



The Awakening

There are moments in the Christian life when the Lord brings two passages of Scripture together in a way that arrests the heart and will not let go. That is what happened to me as I read 1 Samuel 15 on my desk calendar and John 15 in my devotions. In particular, verse twenty-two in First Samuel and the teaching of our Lord in John fifteen seemed to speak with one voice. It was not loud, yet it was unmistakably clear.

As I continued to meditate on these passages, a deep sense of awe filled my heart. Jesus was speaking to His disciples about abiding, while Saul's life revealed the danger of substituting activity for obedience. These truths are not separate. The Lord is not first looking for what we do, but whether we are abiding in Him, and from that abiding, whether we are willing to obey.

This booklet is written with a burden for pastors who love the Lord and desire to serve Him faithfully. Over time, patterns of ministry become familiar and accepted. Yet there are moments when the Lord brings us back to His Word and asks us to look again. Not to condemn, but to clarify. Not to discourage, but to direct.

In more than fifty years of being in church, I cannot recall hearing a message centered on Matthew 5:19. Yet it stands in the Word of God, speaking with quiet authority. When placed alongside John fifteen and First Samuel fifteen, it forms a thread that cannot be ignored.

Jesus did not begin with structure. He began with a relationship. He called His disciples to abide. From that abiding would come fruit, and from that fruit a life that truly honors the Father. This is where everything begins, and where everything must return.

The Danger of Substitution

As we look at 1 Samuel 15, we see a moment that reveals a truth far beyond Saul's life. He was given clear instructions from the Lord. Yet when the time came, he chose a different path. It was not an open rebellion. It still appeared purposeful and even spiritual.

When Saul was confronted, he justified what he had done. He connected it to honoring God. Yet the Word of the Lord came with clarity. To obey is better than sacrifice. No outward act can replace simple obedience.

This reveals a danger that touches every servant of the Lord. There is always a temptation to adjust what God has said in a way that seems reasonable. The intention may appear good, but something has been substituted in place of obedience.

In ministry, this often happens gradually. Patterns develop. Methods are repeated. Expectations form around what has always been done. Activity continues, but obedience may quietly diminish.

Saul's life stands as a warning, not to condemn, but to awaken. He was still active, yet no longer fully aligned with the Word of the Lord. He had moved from obedience to adjustment.

This brings a simple question to the heart. Am I doing what I am doing because it is what I have always done, or because it is what the Lord has said?

The Call to Abide

When we come to John 15, Jesus brings everything back to one word. Abide.

To abide is to remain, to continue, to dwell. It speaks of a constant relationship, not an occasional one. Jesus did not call His disciples to

visit Him. He called them to live in continual dependence upon Him.

The Lord makes it clear that fruit is the result of abiding. He does not command them to produce fruit through effort alone. He points them to the vine. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, no more can they except they abide.

This brings everything back to simplicity. The issue is not how much we are doing. The issue is whether we are connected to Him.

Those who do not abide are described clearly. They do not bear fruit. They wither. They are set aside. This is not a description of inactivity. It is a description of disconnection.

For pastors, this truth brings clarity. The work of the ministry is not sustained by effort alone. It is sustained by abiding. From that place, the Lord shapes both what we do and why we do it.

The Cost of Not Abiding

In John 15, the Lord also shows the cost of not abiding. Those who do not remain in Him are described as branches that wither. The life that once flowed is no longer present in the same way.

This is not the result of a lack of activity, but a lack of connection. The branch has not remained in the vine.

The Lord speaks of these branches being gathered and set aside. This is the language of loss. Not necessarily loss of position, but loss of purpose. The branch no longer fulfills what it was created to do.

For those in ministry, this carries a quiet weight. It is possible to continue in responsibility while something inward is no longer the same. The danger is not always visible at first. It reveals itself over

time through the absence of lasting fruit.

This connects again to Saul. He continued for a time, yet something had already changed. The issue was not outward success, but inward obedience.

The purpose of this truth is not to discourage, but to draw us back. When we understand the cost, we are not driven to fear, but invited to return.

Willingness: The Turning Point

Before there can be obedience, there must be willingness. This is the turning point.

Saul's life reveals what happens when willingness is absent. He adjusted what the Lord had said. His reasoning seemed acceptable, yet beneath it was an unwillingness to fully yield.

In John fifteen, Jesus prepared His disciples for a life that required continual willingness. To abide is not a one-time decision. It is a daily surrender.

For pastors, this truth is both searching and encouraging. The Lord is not first looking for perfection. He is looking for a willing heart. A heart that is open to examine, to respond, and to follow.

Tradition often continues because it is familiar. Yet when the Lord speaks, willingness determines the response. A willing heart receives the light, even when the adjustment is not easy.

God works from within. When willingness is present, He leads step by step. He does not overwhelm. He guides.

So the question is simple. Is the heart willing? When willingness is present, obedience becomes the natural response.

Readiness: Truth That Remains

Willingness opens the heart. Readiness prepares the life.

Readiness is built upon truth that remains. Not passing thoughts, but truth settled in permanent memory.

In John 15, Jesus not only called His disciples to abide. He gave them truth to hold. Truth about Himself, the Father, and the life that would flow through them.

Without this, desire lacks direction. Feelings change, but truth remains. When truth is settled, it provides stability and clarity.

For those who lead others, this is essential. Disciples are not formed through listening alone, but through truth that is received and retained. When a man knows who Christ is and what the Word teaches, he becomes ready.

When a man abides, the words of Christ abide in him. They guide decisions and bring clarity in moments of need.

This is the readiness that allows a pastor to move forward with confidence. Not relying on tradition, but resting in the Word of God.

Three Lives That Speak

The Lord often teaches through lives as well as words. Three lives help us see these truths clearly.

First, Samson. His life was marked by weakness, yet in the end, there

was a turning. The Lord answered, and strength was restored. His life reminds us that even after failure, the Lord can still use a yielded heart.

Next, Paul the Apostle. His life shows steady obedience. From his calling forward, he remained faithful. In him, we see what abiding produces over time.

Then, Lot. He was delivered, yet much was lost. His life reflects the cost of hesitation and compromise.

These lives do not condemn. They reveal. One was restored. One remained faithful. One suffered loss.

The question that follows is personal. What direction is being taken? Is there a return to be made? Is there a path to continue? Or is there a hesitation that must be addressed?

The Lord is not closing a door. He is opening understanding, so that we may respond wisely and move forward in a way that honors Him.

Your Time Is Now

As we bring these truths together from John 15 and 1 Samuel 15, the message is both simple and searching. The Lord has not left His servants without direction. He has spoken clearly. He has shown what He desires. And in His mercy, He has allowed us to see the difference between activity that replaces obedience and a life that flows from abiding in Him.

There are moments when the Lord brings His Word to the heart in a way that calls for a response. Not a rushed response, but a real one. A response that moves beyond agreement and enters into action. This is one of those moments, not because of anything written here, but because of what the Lord has already said in His Word.

Matthew 5:19 stands quietly, yet it speaks with authority. It reminds us that what is taught and how it is lived matters in the sight of God. The Lord is not indifferent to how His Word is handled. He is attentive, and He is faithful to guide those who are willing to listen.

At this point, the application becomes clear. The Lord has not called the pastor simply to preach and to manage, but to teach and to equip. In 1 Timothy 3, the pastor is described as apt to teach. In Ephesians 4, he is given as a pastor-teacher for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry. This is not an added responsibility. It is the calling itself.

To abide in Christ is to be brought back to that calling. It is to move from being primarily a preacher and administrator to becoming a teacher and discipler. It is to equip the saints so that they, in turn, become disciplers of others. This is how the church grows in strength. This is how truth moves from hearing into permanent memory. This is how readiness is formed in the lives of God's people.

For more than thirty years, the LORD has pressed this truth upon my heart. The need for Learning Centers where believers are not only taught but also equipped to retain the truth, grow in understanding, and disciple others. What has been a burden for many years is now something the LORD is beginning to do. Doors are opening. Hearts are responding. The need is clear, and the time is now.

We are willing to help any pastor who desires to take this step to begin a Learning Center. To move from teaching that is heard and forgotten, to teaching that remains and multiplies. This is not a work that must be done alone. It is a work the LORD will guide, and we stand ready to assist in any way we can.

The need before us is not complicated, but it is urgent. The Lord has

already given His pattern and shown us through His Word what He desires His church to become. When believers are taught in a way that truth remains, they begin to grow.

Learning Centers provide a simple and intentional way to begin. Not by replacing what is being done, but by strengthening what is missing. A place where believers move from listening to learning, and from learning to discipling others.

<https://www.learningcenterministries.org> is our website. Please take some time and check it out, and read Our Story. It could be your story.

If the Lord is speaking to your heart, do not set it aside. Begin where you are and trust Him to guide you. What may seem small at the beginning can become a work that bears fruit for years to come.

So the question rests gently, yet clearly. Will there be willingness? Will there be readiness? And will there be a step taken to teach, to equip, and to multiply disciples for His glory?

With love and prayers,
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