

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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What is “the Work of Ministry”?

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Introduction

Sometimes we toss around words without a lot of thought about what we are really saying. This is true of what we call “the work” of God. If you ask a dozen people what “the work” of God is you will probably get a dozen different answers. “The work” has come to mean anything that we do in the name of the Lord or anything that we do that we feel called of the Lord to do. However, if we would but look, the Scriptures have a lot to say about “the work” of God. His work is specific and, since the Garden of Eden, has been building toward an appointed time of completion. Work always has a goal in mind, a point at which the work is completed.

All work, including God's work, has stages to complete. Some things have to be done before other things. You can't continually repeat one stage or aspect of the work but you have to move on to the next phase. That is the nature of work. Isaiah illustrates this clearly with the farmer preparing and planting his ground.

Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he *continually* turn and harrow the ground? Does he not level its surface And sow dill and scatter cummin And plant wheat in rows, Barley in its place and rye within its area? For his God instructs and teaches him properly. ([Isaiah 28:24-26 NASB](#))

Yet we do this. We repeat the same spiritual work over and over and never move to the next phase. Is it because we don't understand what the Lord is doing? Or are we just ignorant of the principles involved? Or are we short-sighted about God's plan and purpose? Whatever the cause, we need to proceed on. We need to accomplish the work of the Lord.

Work Prepared

We need to understand that God doesn't make useless creatures. He created every being with a purpose in mind and with work for that being to do. Even the being that became the devil was created with a purpose and work to perform. [*This being wasn't satisfied with his work but wanted a different place and work, but that is a different lesson.*]

When God made Adam, He put him in a garden and gave him the work of dressing and keeping it. In some sense the Garden was a training ground for Adam as he learned about “subduing the earth” [*Gen. 1:28*]. The work that God has for us is a necessary component of our relationship with Him. Being born into Christ Jesus opens for us the work that God has prepared for us.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. ([Ephesians 2:10 NASB](#))

These are not works that have anything to do with earning our salvation. We have to be “created in Christ Jesus” first [*that's salvation*] before we can accomplish our works that have been prepared for us. These are the works that are part of the plan and purpose of God.

Since all work is “prepared beforehand”, ordained of God, then we know that all individual work is coordinated by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's intent, His corporate work.

God's Work

The Scriptures tell us that we are living stones being built together as a habitation of God through the spirit.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ([1 Peter 2:4-5 NASB](#))

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. ([Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB](#))

Notice that in these Scriptures we are living stones which are “being built together”. This is the work that is being done by the Holy Spirit—building us together. The work has an end purpose when completed—a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Jesus *said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. ([John 4:34 NASB](#))

Part of the work of Jesus was to lay the foundation for the dwelling place of God in the spirit with Himself being the chief cornerstone. This was accomplished by Him

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ([John 17:4 NASB](#))

While Jesus finished His work, the fullness of the completion of the work is not accomplished in our space-time continuum yet.

And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ([Ephesians 4:11-12 NASB](#))

Jesus gave gifts of men, what we call the five-fold ministry, to continue His work of building the Body of Christ. Their goal is to bring people into proper placement and function so that they are

built together into a living temple to be the dwelling place of God.

The focus of the work of the ministry is the building up of the body of Christ. This work continues—

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:13 NASB)

This is the completion of the work: unity of the faith, a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. It would seem to me, then, that any of the work that we designate as “ministry” that is not moving us toward these completion goals is not really a work of the ministry.

Certain things come about as the work is accomplished.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, (Ephesians 4:14-15 NASB)

The end product of the work is that we do not remain children but we grow up into Him. This is accomplished by the individual parts, the joints, being fitted and held together and working properly.

from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16 NASB)

This is the work of the Holy Spirit and He is directing the work of the ministry in order to accomplish the goals determined by God.

Application

Let us examine ourselves. Are we majoring in minors? Are we consumed by things, even the things of ministry, so that we lose sight of the goal? Is our ministry focus the building together of believers or is it some lesser goal? Are we helping others find their place and function or are we entangled in denominational politics? Are we bringing others to maturity or are we keeping them children so that our egos get a boost from their dependency on us?

When Jesus said, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” [Matt. 6:33], He established our priorities. We are not to be concerned about the things, even the ministry things; but, instead, focus on His kingdom, our obedience to His government and the work that He has established for us.

I hope that each one reading this will take these questions to heart. Let the Lord shine His light on our answers. Where necessary, let us repent and give ourselves afresh to “doing His work”.

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