

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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When Work Collapses

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Introduction

This issue of Present Truth Teaching Letter is a companion issue to the November 2008 issue [*When Dreams Crumble*](#). In that issue I spoke of faulty premises and expectations where we are living our lives in an illusion without real substance. In this issue I would like to examine our life's work, that is, the Lord's work to which we have devoted ourselves. The problem arises when our call to the work of the Lord is mixed with humanistic, natural desires rooted in our own self concepts and ambitions. Many ministries operate with a mixed call, some more so than others. However, it should be our desire to have as pure a ministry as we can achieve. One without any focus or orientation toward self but is exclusively concerned with the desires of the Lord and the fulfillment of His purposes.

Our Life's Work

There are two possibilities for the foundation of our work. This is evident in Paul's words to the Corinthians.

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11 NASB)

We have either built our life's work on the foundation of Jesus Christ or we haven't. If we haven't then our life's work has nothing to do with the Lord's plan and purposes regardless of how religious or humanitarian it is or how much apparent good it seems to do in the world. The foundation of Jesus Christ has already been laid by the Father. Anything built on something else is of no value to the Father; it is useless to Him.

So, the first step in our life's work is to make sure that we have an *approved* foundation.

After the foundation of our work is laid, the next step is building.

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be*

revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Corinthians 3:12-13 NASB)

It seems that we determine the building materials used for construction. As we are building we need to remember that what we are building will be put to the test of fire in the Day of the Lord. Gold, silver and precious stones are only made more brilliant by fire while wood, hay, and straw are consumed by fire. If we have built out of the wrong materials our entire life's work goes up in smoke.

So, the second step in our life's work is to make sure that we are using *approved* building materials that will withstand the fire test.

The Ongoing Test

The thought of everything to which I have devoted my life burning to ashes is a terrible thought. This idea should put the fear of the Lord in our hearts and cause us to cry out to Him. The Lord in His mercy and compassion will stress test our work for us before the Day. [*Hebrews 12:26-28*] All that is not of Him collapses when He shakes it.

I suspect that all of us who have been called to minister in the Name of the Lord have at various times had our work collapse on us. In my early walk with the Lord and seeking to minister, I gave eight years of my life to a particular vision of ministry and service. When the Lord shook it, it all collapsed leaving many devastated. Some became bitter and resentful. Some turned away from the Lord. Some laid their hearts bare before the Lord and were purified by a baptism of fire.

The Lord shakes our work now so that it will endure His fire later. We need to be grateful to the Lord and embrace this process.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (*James 1:2-4 NASB*)

The Real Problem

The real problem with our work is found in our motives. These are hidden deep in our heart and are only revealed by circumstances and the Holy Spirit applying the sword or scalpel of the Word.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (*Hebrews 4:12 NASB*)

Our thoughts are part of the functions of our mind; but, our intentions or motivations are part of the functions of our heart and can only be revealed to our understanding by the light of the Word. [see [*Foundation of the Inner Man*](#) for more on this]

While we receive a new nature when we are born again, it co-exists in us with our old nature. We forget that our old nature has two components: the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind. We tend to identify the desires of the flesh with sexual sins and wage war against these sins; but, we tend to forget that the desires of the mind are also part of the old nature. These include less obvious sinful inclinations such as greed, ambition, self seeking, self importance, striving for power and control.

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
(Ephesians 2:3 NASB)

Until our minds are renewed and we begin to mature in the Lord, much of our motivations arise from our old nature. The desires of the mind can be expressed in our religious work causing us to indulge self rather than serving the Lord. The old nature cannot be sanctified so as to become acceptable to the Lord. The desires of the flesh must be put to death and the desires of the mind must be put aside in order to put on the new nature and walk according to the Spirit of the Lord.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--
(Colossians 3:5-10 NASB)

It is imperative for us to do this if we want our life's work to stand in the time of testing and not collapse.

Prime Motivators

The world system has three primary motivators for achievement: 1) money, 2) power, and 3) control. These three are inter-related and operate together. The kingdom of God also has three primary motivators, which are also inter-related: 1) faith, 2) hope, and 3) love.

But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1
Corinthians 13:13 NASB)

These three abide or remain which means that when the shaking comes these will remain. They will withstand the test.

So, to recap:

if we build on an ***approved*** foundation with ***approved*** building materials fulfilling ***approved*** motives, our work will stand in the day of testing and will not collapse.

For more see [*Faulty Foundations and Fuzzy Patterns*](#).

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