

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)

Volume 15, Issue 3

March 2017

Being Productive

The title of this Present Truth Teaching Letter doesn't sound very spiritual. Does it? That's because the practical application of spiritual truth doesn't sound spiritual to our religiously indoctrinated ears. However, reward is based on productivity both personal and corporate; that is, societal.

Peter in his writings give us the qualities that are necessary to make us productive and the results of having these qualities increasing in us.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:8-11 NASB)

There are three results given:

1. they make us neither useless nor unfruitful (in other words, productive) in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ
2. if we practice these qualities we will never stumble
3. an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus is abundantly supplied to us.

The type of productivity that is spoken of in these verses far exceeds anything that we might conceive in terms of secular productivity. Having functioned in the business world for a number of years I recognize the need to be productive. In secular society you are constantly bombarded with self-help books and seminars such as “Ten Steps to Maximum Accomplishment”, “Five Ways to Achieve Success”, or “Super Time Management”. This same worldly methodology is also being brought into the Church in various forms. I don't think that this is what Peter had in mind when he wrote the verses listed above.

There are some that think that there is nothing to do. It has all already been done by grace. However, that viewpoint ignores much of the Scriptures that speak of growing, maturing, and fulfilling what the Lord has called us to do by accomplishing the work that He has beforehand

prepared for us [*Eph. 2:10*]. What we call the “Great Commission” in Matthew 28:18-20 involves our work. We are to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. These are active things that we are involved in with the Lord. This work could be condensed into two categories: evangelize and educate. This is our job and we should be productive in it.

Some think that we all go to Heaven and we all receive the same thing. Well, we don't. This is what Paul said:

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 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. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NASB)

The building materials listed (gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, straw) all represent the quality of each man's work which are obviously different. If a man's work is of high quality, it doesn't burn up and he receives a reward. If a man's work is of poor quality, it burns up and he receives a loss of his reward; however, he is still saved. This shows that salvation has nothing to do with our work or the quality of our work. Only reward or no reward is involved. This does show that what each man receives is not the same. What one receives is directly related to ones own work as Paul clearly states.

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. (1 Corinthians 3:8 NASB)

Does the Lord expect us to be productive in our labor, our work? Of course He does. Read the Parable of the Talents if there is any doubt [*Matt. 25:14-30*]. The Lord gave each “according to his own ability” [*v.15*]. He doesn't expect us to perform beyond what we are capable of but He does expect us to be productive, to show an increase with what He has given.

Just as Jesus said in the parable of the talents, there is a time of reckoning. We have not been taught the extent nor the importance of the time of judgment for our work. Peter gives us a very strong warning about this time of accounting.

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; (1 Peter 1:17 NASB)

In Luke 19:12-27 Jesus told a parable that pictures this exactly. The nobleman that was going away to receive a kingdom gave each of his ten servants a measure of money and told them to “do business with this until I come back”. Then came the day of accounting.

"When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. (Luke 19:15 NASB)

The productive servants received a reward that was proportional to their productivity. However, the servant that was non-productive lost what he had been given.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to lose any reward. I want to be as productive as I can possibly be with what the Lord has given. That is why I “conduct myself in fear” just as Peter said because there is a day coming when we will have to give an account.

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