

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Work of the Ministry

Mark Kolchin

Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

1 Cor. 16:10

What did Paul mean when he said that both he and Timothy worked the work of the Lord? Certainly it did not mean a perfunctory attendance at the assembly meetings only to return home afterwards to a dull, every day routine. Nor would it seem that he was only referring to the occasional opportunities to witness to someone who just “happened” to ask him about his faith and why and what he believed? Neither would it seem that he was referring to a glib, halfhearted promise to pray for a brother or sister going through a difficult trial or to “pitch-in” when there was a request to help out with a physical and financial concern in the assembly. It would not even seem that it meant spending long hours writing up detailed reports of their latest ministry activities, as legitimate as that would seem. Both of them were far too busy for that and probably would have taken the stance of letting the record “speak for itself.” So what then did Paul have in mind when he said to the Corinthian believers that he and Timothy worked the work of the Lord?

For starters, he probably had in mind that the work of the Lord was not just a matter of filling up the schedule, but rather being led of the Spirit to utilize every moment in the best way possible for the Savior. He wrote to the Ephesians and Colossian believers of the importance of “redeeming the time” (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5), knowing that the days were evil and that the Lord Himself said “that the night is coming when no man can work.” (John 9:3) He could urge the Philippian believers to “approve the things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10) with the knowledge that good things are often the enemy of the best. Paul and Timothy alike understood that the work of the ministry was a very real and very serious issue that involved in many cases real life and death situations. Their example should cause us to ponder the path of our feet so that we don’t mistake activity in lesser things for productivity in greater things.

Having both been imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 20:23; Heb. 13:23), Timothy and Paul seemed to make good on every opportunity to serve the Lord. Paul was always “ready to preach the Gospel” with all that was

in him (Roms. 1:15). He urged Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5) even though he had a pastoral gift, thus stressing the importance of Gospel ministry. Preaching the Gospel to them was not merely fulfilling a duty, but an awesome responsibility of standing between the living and the dead (Num. 16:48). When in Athens, he did not wait for an opportunity to witness but he made one instead, confronting and challenging the Jew and Gentile worshippers daily with a powerful message of hope. It was not a strategized approach to evangelism—it was bold, courageous and upfront. He did not work up to it over a period of weeks and months, instead he got right down to business. How different his experience is compared to ours! How often do we engage the lost in meaningful discussion about eternal truths? Inviting the unsaved to an assembly function is one thing (and sometimes a necessary link in the process), but if it does not lead to initiating a substantial spiritual conversation with that person, it may just end up in the file labeled, “Good Intentions.”

From a service standpoint, both men were a model of intensity and fervency. “Be not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Roms. 12:11), Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome. To the Colossian believers he said that whatever they did, they should do heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. (Col. 3:23). When Paul met with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20), he unabashedly told how he had been with them “at all seasons” and not just at his own convenience showing his flexible schedule to accommodate the needs of the saints. His contact with the saints was far more than a brief passing on a Lord’s Day morning! He urged his brethren of the importance of admonishing and exhorting one another and walking in wisdom to them who were outside, something he did regularly. He warned the Corinthians and the Galatians both of the dangers of false teachers and to keep up their spiritual guard; to the Ephesians and Thessalonians he exhorted to walk in the light (Eph. 5:8) and warn the unruly and to support the weak (1 Thess. 5:14). He encouraged all believers to exercise their spiritual gifts and talents given by the Lord to equip one another to do the work of the ministry and to edify the Body of Christ. His Christian experience was anything but mediocre and mundane!

As for Timothy, Paul could say of him to the Philippians that there was no one more like-minded who would naturally care for their state (Phil 2:20). He was mindful of

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Confirmation or Transformation?

J. H. Hutchison

(Adapted from an article that appeared in "Knowing the Scriptures", Mar.-Apr., 1936)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).

The 73rd Psalm illustrates two processes at work in the experience of Asaph. In the first section (1-16), he is being *conformed*. In the second section (17-28), he is being *transformed*. In the first he forms conclusions in the presence of *men*, in the second he forms conclusions in the presence of *God*. From his first position three things impressed him about the wicked.

1. **THEIR PROSPERITY** (3-7). "Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish". Passing through life in this way they have no pains in their death; but their strength is firm (4). Compare this with others who had "waters of a full cup wrung out to them" (10). In that dispensation, prosperity was an indication of God's smile, as we learn in reading Haggai's prophecy. This perplexed poor Asaph.

2. **THEIR PRIDE** (6). God's intention in blessing was to lead them to repentance (Rom 2:4), instead of which it produced pride which bound them like a chain. Agur prayed to be kept from this snare (Prov. 30:9), and Paul warned Timothy against this danger (1 Tim. 6:11). Violence marked them in their dealings (6), similar to what is described later in James 5:5, "Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter".

3. **THEIR PRESUMPTION** (8-10). They thought nothing of setting their mouth against heaven (9), like many who follow in their steps (Jude 16). We have outstanding examples of this today. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).

The consideration of these things led Asaph to conclude that he had erred in having his heart cleansed (13). So it will be if we see things from this point of view. We will find our faith wavering, and our steps slipping if we form our judgment here.

We follow Asaph as he enters the sanctuary for in the words of what another has said, "We seek to interpret God in the presence of difficulties, instead of interpreting difficulties in the presence of God". Having changed his point of view, he sees an entirely different picture. Outside he

saw the wicked and their prosperity; now their peril (18). Like the rich farmer in the parable, they forgot God (Luke 12). Outside he saw their pride; now their panic, "utterly consumed with terrors" (19). Outside he saw their presumption; now their perdition, "Thou castedst them down to destruction" (18).

He now compares himself with the wicked, and sees that they are set in slippery places (18), while he is held by God (23). While it may seem attractive to tread this path, viewed in this light, it has its dangers. The wicked "are brought into desolation" (19); he is guided with God's counsel (24). They are cast down to destruction (18); he is received up into glory (24). What a contrast! How different everything appears viewed in the presence of God!

Asaph appreciated three facts: that God guarded him, guided him, and would glorify him. We enjoy these blessings today. We read:

1. "Who are kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5) - **GUARDED**

2. "He will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13) - **GUIDED**

3. "And whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30) **GLORIFIED**

Asaph now exclaims, "Whom have I in heaven but thee" (25)? He is like the bride who exclaimed, "My beloved is mine" (Song of Sol. 2:16). It is one thing to have God's blessings; it is a greater joy to have fellowship with God. Looking back, Asaph was conscious of backsliding. "Thus was my heart grieved, and I was vexed in my mind" (21). He realized the value of drawing near to God (28), as he compared his past thoughts with his present thoughts.

This scene, in which we are called to live, influences our thoughts, which shape our character. We shall find ourselves thinking as Asaph did in his first view, until we are conformed to this age. Our standards of judgment will be those of the unsaved, and are sense of values governed by what is around us.

To counteract this influence we must have our "minds renewed", by leaving the presence of men, and seeking the presence of God. Failing to change our environment, our environment will change us. Paul spoke in the light of God's presence when he said, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). *

Correction

The correct web site address to obtain brother Larry Price's article on *The Passion of the Christ* film is as follows: <http://larryrprice.com/passionreview/>. The web site address given in the May issue was incorrect. *

