



summer 2007
volume xxii - number 3

CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

"NO MAN THAT WARRETH ENTANGLETH HIMSELF IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE, THAT HE MAY PLEASE HIM WHO HATH CHOSEN HIM TO BE A SOLDIER."
II TIMOTHY 2:4

a publication of mike keyes ministries international

THE TRUE WORK OF MINISTRY PART 2

EPHESIANS 4:11-12

AND HE HIMSELF GAVE SOME TO BE APOSTLES, SOME PROPHETS,
SOME EVANGELISTS, AND SOME PASTORS AND TEACHERS, FOR
THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY, FOR
THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST,
[NKJV]

Notice the phrase in verse 12: ...the work of ministry.... In this Christian Soldier, I'm going to share with you three of the seven works of true

ministry, as found in the New Testament. If you want to maximize your time, energy and effort in ministry, pay

attention to what God tells us in His Word about what the true work of a minister and ministry would be. Let's get started!

HEBREWS 6:10

FOR GOD IS NOT UNJUST TO FORGET YOUR WORK AND LABOR OF LOVE WHICH YOU HAVE SHOWN TOWARD HIS NAME, IN THAT YOU HAVE MINISTERED TO THE SAINTS, AND DO MINISTER.
[NKJV]

1. THE LABOR OF LOVE

This passage tells us that God will not forget our work and labor of love which we show towards His name. This is the first of the seven true works of ministry for all New Testament believers. Its also the most important of the seven, because unless you get a handle on this one, the other labors of ministry will prove to be nothing more than exercises in futility! You see, when you read the Bible, you can easily and quickly see that this business of walking in love is the top priority for believers. Everything starts here, and ends here. Jesus commanded us to walk in love, as He loves us (John 13:34,35), so we have no choice, do we? We MUST learn how to love – or our “ministry”, as far as God is concerned, will be nothing more than hot air, irritating noise, and constant frustration (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Why is this called the labor of love? Because it isn't easy loving people with unconditional love, is it? Its hard work loving unlovely people! If you've been saved for longer than 5 minutes, and have met at least 1 other brother or sister in Christ, you know this to be true! People are selfish. People are ugly. People are rude. People are vindictive. People are jealous, envious and competitive. People are – well – just people! And I'm not talking just about sinners here. I'm talking about Christians too. I've been saved since September 21, 1978, and in full time ministry since September, 1980, and I can tell you without hesitation or reservation – Christians are some of the most unlovely, selfish, self-centered and ugly people out there! Unbelievers have nothing on many of the saints

when it comes to carnality! And guess what? Ministry is all about reaching people, isn't it – saint as well as sinner! Reaching the lost and teaching the Christian.

Remember the old saying: Practice makes perfect? Well, when it comes to loving unlovely people, you need to do exactly that! Practice! Practice loving unlovely people, the way God loves us all. This takes work – hard work. Your flesh will not want to cooperate, so you will need to exercise discipline and determination to accomplish proficiency in this. It takes hard work to get to the place where God's loves dominates in your life, and it takes even more hard work to stay there consistently.

JAMES 1:25

BUT HE WHO LOOKS INTO THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY AND CONTINUES IN IT, AND IS NOT A FORGETFUL HEARER BUT A DOER OF THE WORK, THIS ONE WILL BE BLESSED IN WHAT HE DOES.
[NKJV]

The law of “liberty” is the law of love. It sets you free from people's opinions, reactions, treatments, and anything and everything else people may throw at you. When you walk in love, the ONLY opinion that matters is God's, and that truly sets you free! You're no longer a slave to the last opinion expressed about you! But, this takes work, and it takes practice! Romans 5:5 says the love of God is already within each

believer, by virtue of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. So, all we need to do now is practice loving unlovely people, and each time we do that, we get stronger and better at doing it.

Its like lifting weights. The more you lift, and the heavier the weights, the stronger you become. With love it's the same concept. The more you practice loving, the stronger and better you

become at doing it. Lawyers practice law. Doctors practice medicine. Christians practice loving unlovely people! Its not easy, but its what we're commanded to do, and its where everything begins in Christ. I used to grumble and complain when I had to deal with unlovely Christians in ministry. Finally, after many years of trying, the Lord got through to me, and said: “Instead of mumbling and complaining, why not



use this situation as an opportunity to practice loving an unlovely person!" So now, when I encounter somebody who is less than lovely – I

just say "thank you!" For what? For the opportunity to love an unlovely person, and practicing the love of God, which is the first true

work of ministry for believers.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:3 REMEMBERING WITHOUT CEASING YOUR WORK OF FAITH, LABOR OF LOVE, AND PATIENCE OF HOPE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE SIGHT OF OUR GOD AND FATHER, [NKJV]

Notice in this passage, God is talking about our first true labor of ministry, which is the labor of love, but also, He's talking about the second true work of ministry, which is the labor of faith. The "work" of faith is the labor of entering into His rest, as it says in Hebrews 4:1-11. We work to stay in faith, trusting God and not allowing fear, worry, anxiety or impatience to usurp authority in our hearts, minds and lives. This is not easy, especially when we're surrounded by unbelieving family, friends, or Christians who don't have a clue.

When you need a mountain moved in your life, there will always be a promise from God to cover that need. However, our responsibility is to take God at His word, and discipline ourselves to ignore the circumstances, or outward signs that indicate our imminent defeat! We're to be like

2. THE LABOR OF FAITH

Abraham, who is called the "father of our faith". Why? Because he chose to believe God, in spite of the fact that God's promise was absolutely impossible in the natural realm! Read Romans 4:17-21 carefully, and prayerfully. Abraham was close to 100 years old when it was time for his wife to conceive and give birth to Isaac. Even Sarah, his wife, was not far behind, being about 90 years old when God said she would conceive a baby! Now if you don't think this was impressive, go down to your local nursing home, and check out the women who are 90 years old, or close to it. Then check out the men who are 100 years old, or close to it. Ask yourself: "Could any of these people conceive and give birth in their old age?" The Bible says Abraham did not consider his own body, or the body of his wife, but chose to believe God instead! Wow!

1 Timothy 6:12 tells us to FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH! It's a fight to believe God! Its work to stand in faith when everybody, including the devil, is trying to convince you not to. There will always be more people trying to convince you to doubt God than there are who try to encourage you to believe God, so you're going to have to constantly swim upstream so-to-speak, and choose to believe God, no matter what people say, no matter what your body may say, or no matter what the devil says. Period! Its hard work, but like it says in Hebrews 3 and 4, we're told to labor to enter into His rest! That means we work to get into faith, relax, and trust God! No matter what you're facing in your life right now, that is what you must do if you're to be a confident, effective and fruitful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS 4:19 MY LITTLE CHILDREN, FOR WHOM I LABOR IN BIRTH AGAIN UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU, [NKJV]

3. THE LABOR OF PRAYER

The third true work of ministry is the labor of prayer. In all my travels as a Christian, minister and missionary, I've encountered very few who truly enjoy praying, and excel in doing so! If

you're one of them, I salute you, and admire you from afar! But for most of the believers I've met, including most ministers, the business of prayer is something they've never developed proficiency

in. There is a reason for that. We live in bodies that are dead-to-sin. Your flesh does not want to pray – ever. It must be subdued and made to obey when it comes to prayer.



But, if you want any kind of meaningful results, changes and improvements in your ministry state-of-affairs, you're going to have to develop the labor of prayer in your life and ministry. Prayer changes things, because its the greatest expression of our dominion on this planet, according to God's original intent (see Genesis 1:26-28). An example is Ezekiel 22:30.

God was searching for just one man, who could stand in the gap, intercede for Israel, and prevent Divine judgment. Because He couldn't find even one, God was forced to pour out His wrath and judgment upon Israel for their sins. Well, if our prayers don't make any difference, why is God looking all around for somebody to pray so He doesn't pass judgment on Israel? This is just one

example of why the labor of prayer is so important. How often do you pray? Is prayer a vital part of your daily routine? The truth is this: your prayers make a difference, but you're going to have to develop discipline in this area, because it takes work to pray!

COLOSSIANS 4:12-13

**EPAPHRAS, WHO IS ONE OF YOU, A BONDSERVANT OF CHRIST, GREETES YOU, ALWAYS LABORING FERVENTLY FOR YOU IN PRAYERS, THAT YOU MAY STAND PERFECT AND COMPLETE IN ALL THE WILL OF GOD.
[NKJV]**

Epaphras labored fervently in prayer. Its like what Paul said about his laboring in birth again, until Christ was formed in the Galatians. If you're a woman who has given birth, or if you've been around when a women was giving birth, you know its not an easy thing! Its hard and painful. It requires an intense amount of strength, stamina and hard work. That's why a woman giving birth

is referred to as woman in LABOR! And spiritually, that's the way it is in prayer. Its like giving birth to a baby. Lots of grunting, groaning, pushing, sweating, crying and screaming – followed by the joy of seeing the fruits of that labor! Isaiah 40:31 says we renew (or exchange) our strength in God when we wait upon Him. Waiting is a form of prayer, and it

takes discipline to do this. Do you do it? You MUST learn the value of waiting upon the Lord in order to be strong, and stay strong!

In our next Christian Soldier, we'll continue our study on the true work of our ministry, looking at some of the other ways we're told to fulfill the work of the ministry!

