

The Struggle Between The “Flesh” And The “Spirit” In Ministry

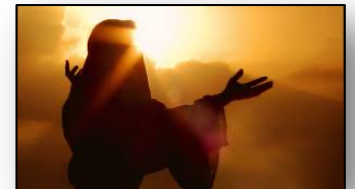
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Who ever thought that "ministry" would include "standing up for God"? But I guess that is really what ministry is about, isn't it? When we are "bruised" by fellow believers, it is like dealing with a "bad cop." It does a number on our brains and our spirit!

"Ministry" and "life" have always included the struggle between the politics of "flesh" and the Spirit:



- Cain killed Abel because of jealousy (who did God love the most?).
- The world became filled with selfish, evil, ungodly people.
- Noah was rejected by all those around him.
- God had to destroy the people He loved and save a remnant of believers.
- God "chose" a "race" of people who would be "His people." He would make them an example for all to see and follow.
- For the thousands of years after the flood, people "wrestled" with politics, selfish power, and the results of not honoring God. God blessed and cursed people and kingdoms based on their reverence of Him.
- Once again, God was discouraged with the petty, selfish actions of people. Instead of destroying the world again, He came to live among us and show us His amazing love. Jesus taught and "pleaded" with people to worship God through pure hearts and obedient actions that honored God.
- Jesus was killed by the "politics" of those who had their own agendas.
- Paul, and the other Apostles spoke and wrote about the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. Their ministries were very effective, and the work of Jesus continued through them. Most of them were killed by "political" people who refused to submit to God.
- We, today, carry on the same ministry as God in the Old Testament, as Jesus' life and ministry, and as the Apostles of the early Church: to proclaim the love of God and to challenge people to worship Him with their whole hearts!
- The Church has always been a fellowship of believers and also a haven for powerful people to work out their fleshly, political desires.



I love the passion and conviction that is highlighted in Hebrews 12:1-3:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Jesus is our example for how to "do" this challenging ministry "thing." He endured the cross only by focusing on the joy set before Him!

Yes, we are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses" who have gone before us, and who continue to minister in spite of the political "landscape" of the local church or organization. It is our challenge to focus on the joy of ministry, instead of the pain of the cross!

Paul described the "struggle" or "war" that is waging around the ministry in 2Cor. 10:3-5

"For though we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of the world. Instead, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We tear down arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God; and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."



You have to remember that the enemy hates what you do! He is committed to destroying everything that is done in the name of Jesus! He will work in your mind and thoughts. His greatest tools are discouragement and depression. This is the "war" that is waging in your spirit! You must, as Paul said, "take every thought captive." When faced with a discouraging bit of news, you have to forcibly focus on the fact that God has called you to this ministry and the ministry is HIS work, not yours. You have to mentally submit to His Spirit daily and rely on Him for strength and wisdom. That is operating in the "spirit" and not in the "flesh."

As you wade through the "stuff" of church work, don't let discouragement take hold! The enemy wants you to be discouraged and to give up! The other passage that speaks directly to our struggle against the temptation of the "flesh" in ministry is 1Cor. 15:58:

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Remember who wrote this passage. It is Paul who was beaten, stoned, and imprisoned! Stand strong!