


CHRIST THE THEME OF MINISTRY

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*The Apostle Paul
2 Corinthians 4:3-6*



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Dear Friends,

The past few months have been exceptionally busy, hence, the reason this update is arriving to you in October. It is my prayer that the following will help bring you up to speed as far as what has transpired, both in ministry and in my personal life.

As you read this, please keep in mind that the following happenings from July to October are reflective of the commitment that I have had to my family and Jesus Christ and His Gospel, for many years now. My goal in sharing this letter with you is to help you understand our ongoing situation, and to simply ask for prayer. Thank you for praying and for all who have been instrumental in supporting the work we are involved in!

REMEMBERING JULY

Due to the constant financial struggle we have faced as a family, I started a new local business here in July. My wife has been working full time with her new business yet we have no commissions yet. We have been living day-to-day, oftentimes not having enough gas money for our cars and struggling to put food on the table. The missions fallout we went through a number of years ago coupled with my back injury in 2009 has left us in a constant flux of financial hardship. Altogether, we have lived just above the poverty level ever since we began exposing deception "in the church," a number of years ago.

This has been a very difficult reality to live through, we have not been able to even get "one step ahead." I have been living through a deeply humiliating circumstance as a husband and father, and those of you who have been through similar things understand this completely. It is part of life, and it is part of adjusting to what many families have come to realize as "the new normal."

In order to try to alleviate our current situation, I recently turned my old pickup truck into a non-potable water truck. I spent a tiny bit of money we had to get a 250-gallon water tank and I began delivering water to local residents. The California drought is very bad here and we live in an area that is in a dire water shortage situation.

When I began working it only took a couple weeks for my client list grow – a lot! I was working many hours each day and taking a serious chance of further hurting my back.

Nonetheless, I did what I could. I kept working, and kept trying to pay our bills on time. Instead of making pleas for help on the Internet, I just got up each morning, prayed, took the kids to school, and began to deliver water.

The month of August lay just around the corner and I was sure that this new jump-start business would shave off the extra stress of our financial situation. However, I was wrong. To date I have raw tires on my truck, a blown out muffler, and have incurred various repairs and business related expenses. These speak to the fact that a lot of work has been accomplished, however, our ministry is suffering due to my time away from my desk and correspondence, and my lack of research and writing.

All of these things added to the daily concern I have for what is going in churches regarding the great apostasy and many Christians falling prey to false teachers, has been a great struggle for me. With high hopes of being

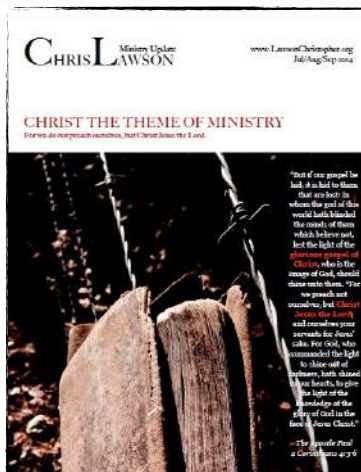
able to cover our monthly expenses and further help my wife get her new business off the ground, I was working far too much for what my back could handle. With the added physical strain on my back I tried to balance the muscular distress with swimming/surfing. Over the past few years this has helped to alleviate my back pain. This is a double-benefit too because when I am in the ocean I am usually with our kids. The month of August appeared and was gone before I knew it. September was a blur too.

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

Working anywhere between 8-12 hours a day, much of it dragging around 400 feet of garden hose and over 100 feet of fire hose, I was hauling many tons of water to customers. I was also spending a small fortune on gasoline. Soon enough, I realized that I needed an assistant to run this business. Billing, scheduling, hauling, maintenance, help with the excess physical labor; it was just too much for me and I could not afford to hire an employee.

Still struggling to catch up on ministry e-mails, return phone calls, produce new website content, I began to feel some of the pre-injury symptoms in my back that I had been feeling years ago, before my back injury in 2009. Internally, my back was beginning to feel the excess labor work.

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”
- 2 Corinthians 4:5



By mid-September I knew I was getting into the serious danger zone when many of my evenings included icing my back, taking muscle relaxers to deal with the tightness and pain, and crawling on the floor to move around. Sleeping horribly again, the reality of what was going on really began to hit me emotionally. At 46 years old, crawling across the floor is not the ideal way to start the day? For the first time in over four years I was having excessive difficulty getting off of my single mattress on the living room floor. Sleep deprived and aching, taking the kids to school each day was (and has been) the best way to adjust into work mode. I could then run the water business, and if time allowed, do what I could ministry-wise with SRN.

Amidst the busyness of working my new water business and trying to maintain SRN, we decided to host a last minute Evening of Discernment for our SRN ministry. We did this on September 23. Authors Larry DeBruyn (Guarding His Flock Ministries) and Warren B. Smith (From the New Age to Amazing Grace) joined us on this evening and we are so grateful for all who were able to join us and help cover the costs. We were blessed that people would come to our small seaside town for an evening of encouragement, strengthening through God's Word, and prayer and fellowship.

It was just a week or so after this greatly encouraging evening that I came to the frustrating conclusion that I would have to completely stop all labor intensive work, and completely end my new water business. Knifing pains in my back, similar to my pre-injury symptoms back in 2009, were upon me. I looked down at a Daisy plant in the ground that I had pruned and nurtured for two months, that a construction worker had just stepped on and crushed. As I was looking down I felt pain shooting across my back. At that point I just said out loud to myself, "Later dude, your done! That's it - it's over! No more Water-boy!" I know this sounds humorous, but that is what I said!

Along the way in all of this a good friend of ours let me use a 500-gallon water tank/trailer, fully equipped with an engine to transfer/spray water. He very graciously encouraged me and supported me in this new endeavor and he also covered the cost of some repairs. This helped a great deal with watering and increased my capacity to deliver a lot more water. For all of this I am deeply grateful. Thanks again "M".

From July to October I experienced many blessings and was able to share the Lord with many people. The down side of this new endeavor was that my writing and correspondence have suffered greatly, and now I am back to where I was before. I have come to a final five-year conclusion that I can never do labor intensive work again, unless the Lord heals me completely. Physical rehab exercises, walking less than a mile and swimming and surfing help my back, and these offset the muscular pain in my paraspinal muscles (and lower lumbar discs). Whatever I do from here on out I have to stick with the basics, and simply not get involved with labor-intensive work.

What's next?

We are going to press on, look to the Lord daily, continue to raise our family, and love and serve those whom The Lord places in our path. We are going to keep doing what we have been doing for over 20 years now, in the strength and power and joy that the Lord gives us. As far as raising ministry support and working extra jobs to make ends meet, we will just do what is placed before us, trust the Lord for His provision, and "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

In a recent conversation, a person mockingly attempted to address my current life circumstance. This person brazenly said, "Your God doesn't provide for you!" My response was simply, "God is not a genie that is here to fulfill our selfish little requests."

God Himself says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

- 2 Corinthians 4:6

My current life experience is a reminder that the Christian life is not about "getting what we want" and "living prosperously." If God chooses to bless people with finances and material goods that is His own prerogative, and there are reasons He does so. Contrary to this, Satan is the "prince [ruler] of this world" and the "god of this age," and he provides for his own children too.

Regarding the devil and his own, Jesus confronted and rebuked human pride this way:

John 8:44-45 - *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I [Jesus] tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

Jesus also explained to His disciples why He must go, that He would send the Person of the Holy Spirit - the Comforter, to them. He also mentioned "the prince of this world."

John 16:7-11 - *Nevertheless I [Jesus] tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

How then should we as Christians live in this world today, whether we are healthy or sick, or living in plenty or in want, or disabled and handicapped? Or, feeling the brunt of persecution by the world and the apostate church? Paul the apostle, to the glory of God, explains how we are to live, how Christ is to be the theme of each Christians lifestyle (ministry), and how we are to keep our perspective on *eternal things*, and not on the things of the world. The following two chapters from Second Corinthians are a fresh reminder of what our focus ought to be.

Paul's Apostolic Ministry (2 Corinthians 4:1-18)

Christ is the Theme of Ministry

"1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not [we do not lose heart]; 2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty [shame], not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost [perishing]: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest [that they might not see] the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5 For

we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency [surpassing greatness] of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Trials Abound in the Ministry

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you. 13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound [abound] to the glory of God.

Motivation of Eternal Perspective

16 For which cause we faint not [we do not lose heart]; but though our outward man perish [is decaying], yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The Temporal and Eternal (2 Corinthians 5:1-21)

Motivation of the Future Presence of Christ

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [our body] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest [pledge] of the Spirit. 6 Therefore we are always confident [of good courage], knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Motivation of Future Reward

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him [pleasing to Him]. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Motivation of the Love of Christ

11 Knowing therefore the terror [fear] of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. 12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober [of sound mind], it is for your cause. 14 For the love of Christ constraineth [controls] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Motivation of the Message of Reconciliation

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit [namely], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing [accounting] their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us [were making an appeal through us]: we pray you in Christ's stead [we beg you on behalf of Christ], be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be [the representative of] sin for us, who knew no sin [in an experiential way]; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

May the Lord bless and guide each of you as you trust Him in all things.

Chris Lawson

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