

THE WORK OF MINISTRY It comes as a great relief when you realize that God's servants, if they are faithful in their ministry, are not held accountable for what their people do. If they were, then Moses and Paul are the two biggest failures in ministerial history!

God holds us accountable to do our work faithfully as He directs and as He enables, and the consequences are not in our hands. The pastor who expects all of his people to develop into spiritual giants is bound to be disappointed. For that matter, how many pastors become "giants"?

"Do you know what the formula is for blessing in ministry?" Dr. Lehman Strauss asked me many years ago. "It is simply to preach, and pray and plug away." I've learned that he is right.

Ours is a ministry of faith, and we don't always see the results. The harvest is not the end of the meeting or of the church year. The harvest is the end of the age, and the Lord of the harvest will see to it that His good and faithful servants will get their just rewards.

The longer you minister, the better you understand that God has "seasons" to His work. He has a right time for everything, and everything is beautiful in its time (Eccles. 3:1-11). He uses different workers at different times to accomplish various purposes. A ministry you begin may be completed by someone else, but both will share the reward and the joy of working together for Him (John 4:34-38).

The pastor who wants only to build a crowd, and not a church, doesn't have to work by faith. There are many surefire methods for entertaining the sheep and attracting the goats. But the minister who truly wants to edify the church must do his work by faith, and he will not always be able to measure the "results."

George Morrison said, "God rarely permits His servants to see all the good they are doing." When we wonder if it is really worth it all, we need to lay hold of His unchanging promise that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

The measurements for ministry are so confused these days that it's easy for any of us to be intimidated. (The fastest way to feel guilty is to attend a pastors' conference and listen to the speakers being introduced.) The discouragement that comes from intimidation (or envy) is one of Satan's chief weapons, and we must fight against it.

There are no small churches and there are no big preachers. All of us are important in the work of God, and He will see to it that no man's work will go unrecognized or unrewarded. Don't be too quick to praise another man's ministry, or to underrate your own. When tempted to do so, read and ponder I Cor. 4:5. . . .

"Is it really worth it all?" Yes, if you are doing it for the glory of the Lord. And the best part is, what you do will last forever.