

No Sweat

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the importance of ministering in God's strength rather than relying on human effort, drawing lessons from Isaiah's transformation and the need for cleansing in our service.

Scripture: Genesis 3:17-19, Isaiah 6:1-3, Isaiah 6:5, Ezekiel 22:30, Ezekiel 44:17-18, Matthew 11:28, John 3:30

Topics: "Ministry", "Serving in God's Strength"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes that true ministry should be done as a service unto the Lord, free from human striving and effort, which he equates to 'sweat.' He explains that sweat is a result of the curse of sin, and that when we serve in our own strength, we become frustrated and ineffective, much like the prophet Isaiah before his encounter with God. By recognizing our limitations and serving in God's strength, we can find freedom and joy in our ministry, regardless of its scale. Yohannan encourages believers to seek God's presence and to minister out of love for Him, rather than out of self-will or self-effort. Ultimately, he calls for a transformation in how we approach our service, focusing on knowing God and doing His work in His way.

Transcript

When our ministry to the people around us is done as a ministry unto the Lord--doing His work in His way--there will be no striving. There will be no human sweat. Why? Because sweat signifies man's effort. The first time sweat is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 3:19. Because Adam had eaten from the forbidden tree, God told him, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:17-19). Sweat is a result of the curse that sin brought. Because of it, the ground would not yield its fruit without man's effort and sweat. Scripture also tells us that those who ministered before the Lord in the inner court were not to wear anything made of wool, anything that would cause them to sweat. "And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court . . .

They shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat" (Ezekiel 44:17-18). This is a picture of the kind of service that honors the Lord. Work done out of man's ability, smartness or money can be a horrible sweat. But when you come to the place in your life at which you begin to live and serve in His strength, you understand what it means to bear His yoke, which is easy and light (see Matthew 11:28). In

this way, the assignment He gives you will never destroy you emotionally or physically.

It will not tear you apart. Why? Because you are not working in the realm of human talents, resources and strength. You are not producing it out of your own labor and sweat. There is no longer any flesh involved. It is Him--ministry unto Him and empowered by Him. This brings tremendous freedom and liberty to laugh and be content and joyful in whatever comes. It makes no difference whether you are asked to turn the world upside-down or just to be a doorkeeper at the house of God.

You simply do the work that He has given you in the strength that He supplies as a ministry unto Him. Forsaking Our Own Ways Is your life full of suspense, frustration and discouragement? Are you worried about the future? Are you anxious and frustrated, discouraged in the ministry and ready to quit? Are you one saying, "This ministry stuff is hard. It's not fair. I just want to do some ordinary job and have a normal life again"? Maybe you need to learn from the life of the prophet Isaiah.

Roy Hession, in his book "When I Saw Him . . .": Where Revival Begins¹ relates Isaiah's encounter with the Lord. He starts out by describing him, from the first five chapters of Isaiah, as being a man full of anger. As a prophet, he is speaking the words of God, but you can hear his anger and frustration in it all. Isaiah is really sweating. He is trying to do what God called him to do, but in his own strength, ability and sweat. Then in Isaiah 6 something happens. I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:1-3). Isaiah "saw the Lord." This changed everything. In God's holy presence, he becomes absolutely undone. And not only did he see the Holy One, but listen as he describes in detail the heavenly creatures who cried out, "Holy is the LORD!"

Each seraphim had six wings. Notice how only two of the wings were for the work of flying; the other four were used to veil themselves. These were incredibly glorious and beautiful creatures, but the One who sat on the throne was far greater and infinitely more beautiful and awesome. The seraphim didn't want their presence in any way to divert attention from the One who sat on the throne, so they covered themselves with their wings. Please understand. Isaiah's ministry was preaching!

He was a powerful orator--a prophet! But suddenly, as he stood in God's presence with the veiled seraphim, he saw how his work, all his service was just filthy rags because it was done in his own strength. He was striving and sweating doing the ministry. The same thing can happen to us when we come into His presence. Our strength, abilities and success become of no importance. In His presence, all else becomes shadows. The strength and effort of ourselves are exposed for the frailty they are compared to His.

My brothers and sisters, we must have this type of experience in our ministry. We must continually see the Lord. By this our ministry remains focused on the Holy One, and we live in His presence and minister in His strength. Like the seraphim, the majority of our ministry must be not the work, but be ministering to the Lord--in everything seeking to exalt Him, to magnify Him and to bring all the attention and praise to the One on the throne. Like John the Baptist, we must live with the ministry mindset that "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30, NIV).

When God took away Isaiah's uncleanness, his ministry was transformed and without sweat. The same thing happens to us as we continually come before Him. We are taken up with Him and lost in the wonder of His presence. Then our ministry and what we can do no longer matter; it is only Him and seeking to bring Him glory. My brothers and sisters, this is the way to live! Let us lay down our striving and our sweat and do His work His way. Then there is nothing to get frustrated and worked up about, and our lives bear good fruit that endures for all eternity.

My Personal Experience How Isaiah was in the first five chapters of the book of Isaiah reminds me of myself in the beginning days of our movement. The preaching I did in many churches during those days was very judgmental and critical. I used kind words, but inside I was angry all the time. I was frustrated. God had told me to do what I was doing, and I was doing it. I expected people to jump up and down in excitement and join with us to see God's work done, but it wasn't happening that way at all!

Instead, right after I shared about the great need of the lost world, the leaders of these churches would take me out for ice cream, all while having a good time laughing and joking. It was while driving in North Carolina one day, from one meeting to the next, that I simply could not take it anymore. I was so frustrated and angry, trying in every way I knew how to do the ministry He had called me to and still not seeing the results I expected. In the midst of this frustration, driving along in a little Chevette, the Lord spoke: "My son, you are so torn up and hurt inside.

You are complaining and murmuring like you are against the whole world and the whole world is against you. Just give it up. It's Me. Do only what I ask you to do. That's all that matters. Don't seek for praise. Don't seek for results." I was on the road for an hour and a half as the Lord spoke to me. When it was over, I was so thrilled and excited to get to the next meeting place because of the incredible freedom that had just entered my life. I arrived at my meeting and shared, and the Lord touched the hearts of people that night.

I couldn't even remember all that I had said. It was nothing I made happen. Many came forward with tears and repentance. I ministered with the awareness that I was there only because He asked me to come. I represented Christ--that was all I knew. I was free, and what I was doing was only for Him. Nothing else mattered. I wasn't looking for results. I wasn't striving any longer. That was one of the significant turning points in my life and in our ministry. Consecrated Flesh What are some sure signs that we are ministering in our own strength?

When we seek to do the ministry dependent upon our own strength rather than ministering out of the abundance of a life lived in His presence, three things happen. First, our service becomes self-willed. I see the needs. I make the plans. I have the agendas. I know better. It is ME! Second, our service is by self-effort. It is my effort. It is my work. It is laborious and produces sweat. It is a pain in the neck. Third, it is for self-glory. I get disappointed when people don't recognize what I have done.

It bothers me when people don't appreciate me or when somebody else gets the appreciation for what I have done. Because my flesh did it, I want something out of it. We are full of our own ways. Jessie Penn-Lewis was a godly woman greatly used in the Welsh revival. In the book, *Molded by the Cross*, she tells how God dealt with her on this issue. Then came the climax, when one morning I awoke and saw before me a hand holding up in terrible light a handful of filthy rags, whilst a gentle voice said: "This is the outcome of all your past service for God."

"But Lord, I have been surrendered and consecrated to Thee all these years; it was consecrated work!"
"Yes, My child, but all your service has been CONSECATED FLESH; the outcome of your OWN ENERGY; your OWN PLANS for winning souls; your OWN DEVOTION. All for Me I grant you, but yourself, all the same."² Our service can be just flesh that is consecrated to God. But God does not want flesh consecrated to Him. It is full of wrong motives, stress, worry and sweat. For Isaiah, the answer to the problem was cleansing.

He admitted his sin. He said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). The answer is the same for us. No matter where we are in our journey, when we fail in our ministry, beginning to carry things out in our own flesh, we need to come before Him and repent. He is faithful to cleanse our ministry and purify us for service. For Isaiah there was the burning coal that the angel brought to touch his lips. The great ministry Isaiah had happened after that incident.

We must have a similar experience, to be cleansed of our own ways so that we may know Him and serve Him in a way that brings Him true honor and praise. Know Him Today, as of old, God is searching for those who will do His work in His way-- those who will simply seek to know Him and minister out of their love for Him and as unto Him. In Ezekiel 22:30 God said, "So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one."

Notice the statement, "to stand . . . before Me." God was looking for just one person to simply "stand" before Him, to come into His presence and know Him. The sad thing is, if you read earlier in that chapter of the book of Ezekiel, you find many people--prophets, priests and princes--involved in active, visible service. But God said (paraphrase), "In all of these I can't find even one who knows My ways. All they want is to know My acts. Just like the children of Israel, they want miracles.

They want results. They want things they can see and talk about. But they do not want to know My ways." How I pray that the Lord would find in us a people who seek the greater thing--sitting at His feet in love and adoration, wanting simply to draw close to our Lord and know Him more. Only when we become people who live in His presence, continually listening for Him, will we be people fully equipped for every good work, able to carry out the ministry He gave us to do.

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