**Reaping That for Which You Have Not Labored**

*John 4:34-38*

**Introduction**

1. Jesus was passing through Samaria on His way to Galilee and encountered a woman at Jacob’s well who He taught concerning Himself, and the life-giving water He had to offer.
2. The woman, concluding Jesus was indeed the Messiah, left to tell others in the city. These went out of the city to come to Jesus.
3. The disciples of Jesus urged Jesus to eat some food, but Jesus, having His mind preoccupied with the spiritual conversation He just had, directed the mind of His disciples to the spiritual food they were to consume along with Him – the Father’s work.
4. As the crowd from Samaria approached, Jesus told His disciples that the spiritual field was white for harvest, and that they were to enter into the labors of another to reap (John the Baptist; Jesus Himself with the woman), and gain reward – **John 4:35-38**
   1. The disciples were given a great responsibility in their labor in the gospel as they entered in the labor of so many who had gone before them. (More than just John, prophets, etc.)
   2. They needed to proceed with humility, diligence, and careful attention.
5. This principle may most naturally in context be applied to evangelistic efforts. However, it is a principle which brings great meaning to other areas of our life as well.
6. One Sows and Another Reaps
7. Both sowing and reaping are necessary, and no one alone receives glory.
   1. **John 4:36** – rejoice together.
   2. **1 Corinthians 3:5-8** – planting/watering – as the Lord gave to each one.
      1. **(v. 5)** – each does not necessarily have the same position.
      2. **(vv. 6-7)** – each relies upon God for the increase.
      3. **(v. 8)** – each will receive reward according to his own labor.
   3. The reaper is not necessarily lesser than the sower, but also realizes the important foundation laid for him to do what he is doing.
      1. Paul was not suggesting that he was greater than Apollos because he planted.
      2. He was pointing out the opposite – he was no greater than Apollos.
      3. Yet, Apollos would have needed to respect the work Paul did, and not go against it – **(vv. 10-11** – not building on another foundation than Christ).
8. The one who reaps what another has sown must not forget the labors of the sower:
   1. **Deuteronomy 6:10-12** – God warned the Israelites about forgetting what God had given them in the land.
   2. **Deuteronomy 8:11-17** – such would lead to a departure from the Lord’s ways, and therefore undercut the very fundamentals which led to such prosperity (here, following God).
   3. When one does not remember the hard work of others before them which put them in such a position, the very blessings they take for granted are in danger of being taken away – **Ecclesiastes 2:18-21**
      1. If left to a fool who does not value the labor performed by the one before him he may ruin it all.
9. It can be our tendency to take for granted the things left to us, but God wants us to recognize the work that went into it so that we build on it, not letting it go to waste.
10. We Enter into the Labor of Others
11. Faith Passed Down Through Generations
    1. While our faith must be our own, and none of us can be pleasing to God simply based on what another does, it is by God’s design that faith be passed down through generations:
       1. **Proverbs 22:6** – train a child in the way.
       2. **Deuteronomy 6:6-9** – teach diligently to your children.
       3. When things weren’t taught – **Judges 2:10-11**
    2. While it may be that some were not taught the truth by their family who raised them, many of us have entered into the labors of others – **2 Timothy 1:5-8**
       1. Timothy was raised to know God by his mother and grandmother – **2 Timothy 3:15** – from childhood known the scriptures.
       2. **(vv. 6-8)** – Paul’s exhortation is that Timothy would not let that go to waste, but exercise his abilities for the sake of God, even in the face of adversity.
    3. Those who have fought the spiritual battles and ran the race of faith before us did not do so that we might nullify their efforts through our own lack of diligence – **Hebrews 12:1-2** – we are to run the race as if they were watching.
    4. Common thought – Parents do not want to position their children to do as well as they have, but better.
       1. This is a logical thought.
       2. If each successive generation is giving their due diligence in raising the next and living faithfully themselves there will be an increase of faith in each generation.
    5. Why are some generations not as knowledgeable, fervent, and actively diligent as the one before – THEY HAVE NOT CONSIDERED AND APPRECIATED HOW THEY HAVE ENTERED INTO THE LABORS OF ANOTHER.
       1. They have taken it for granted.
       2. They have not understood the responsibility to finish the work.
12. Spiritual Victories Over Error
    1. The NT church has a past of valiantly confronting and defeating onslaughts of error levied by Satan and his workers.
       1. **1 Timothy 3:15** – pillar and ground of truth.
          1. **1 Timothy 4:1, 6, 11** – Warning of apostasy, encouragement to instruct in such matters.
       2. **Jude 3** – contend earnestly for the faith.
       3. The truth has been upheld, in part, due to these efforts by faithful men to combat error.
    2. The same is true for later generations – battles over countless issues and errors have taken place, and the truth has been upheld.
       1. Institutionalism, Instrumental Music, MDR, fellowship, etc.
    3. We enter into the labors of great people of faith who in diligence rightly divided God’s word – **2 Timothy 2:15**
       1. It is our responsibility to continue to fight the fight of faith, not lay down and rest.
       2. “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.” (Ronald Reagan)
          1. Like we reap the benefits of the countless sacrifices of our elders to secure freedom in this country…
          2. …So we have reaped the benefits of those efforts of faithful men before us who have fought for the truth.
          3. WE MUST NOT LET SUCH BE IN VAIN.
    4. **Acts 20:25-31** – Paul did not labor among the Ephesians so that when he left they could lower their guards and let error in.
    5. We must hold fast what we have been taught, defending it ourselves, so that we continue the work they passed on to us – **2 Thessalonians 2:15**
    6. **2 Timothy 4:1-8** – Paul’s final charge to Timothy was to preach the word and defend the truth. Such was laid upon him as Paul, who had taught Timothy much, was nearing the end of his life.
       1. Paul had laid much groundwork in the defense of truth.
       2. Timothy was, in a way, being sent into the labors of Paul to continue the work of defending the truth.
       3. So it is with all of us now – we must take up the mantle of faith and fight the good fight as those before us have.
13. When We Enter into the Labor of Others
14. Look Up and See the Work There is to Do
    1. **John 4:35** – Jesus demonstrated that there is nothing to wait for, but that there is work to do now.
    2. We must not be blind to all that has been accomplished before us and for us but acknowledge such and be willing to continue the work!
       1. Jesus’ food was to FINISH the Father’s work – **John 4:34**
    3. Is the work finished? – **John 9:4** – as long as it is day there is work to do.
    4. It is wrong to assume that we are afforded to do less than those before us just because they have done so much to our advantage.
       1. If anything, we are given greater responsibility with the resources they have provided through their own labors.
       2. We must use and further our talents – **Matthew 25:20-23** – we must view the labor of others we enter into as the ***“few things”*** that have been entrusted to us to be ***“faithful over.”***
          1. We must further them, or reap the consequences – **Matthew 25:26-30** – are we ***“wicked and lazy?”***
15. Pray for More Laborers
    1. Jesus saw the great potential for spiritual healing in the masses, but also saw the great need for more workers – **Matthew 9:35-38**
    2. It is God’s will that those who become disciples join in the ongoing work of the kingdom – **Matthew 28:18-20** – this is an ongoing cycle.
       1. Make disciples – teach them to observe My commands – included is to make disciples…
       2. **2 Timothy 2:2** – commit to faithful men to teach others also. (as Paul had committed them to Timothy)
    3. We must stress that the teaching/edifying we do in the church is part of God’s answer to the prayer that requests for more laborers – **Ephesians 4:11-12**

**Conclusion**

1. We must recognize the great responsibility placed upon us as we enter into the labor of others before us.
2. Others will enter into our labor after we are gone, and we would want them to increase in such matters of faith.
3. Are we seeking to further and finish the work of those who have done such good work for the Lord’s sake? Or are we taking such for granted, and letting it go to waste?
   1. We will not be able to rejoice in what they have sown unless we ourselves fulfill our responsibility to reap.