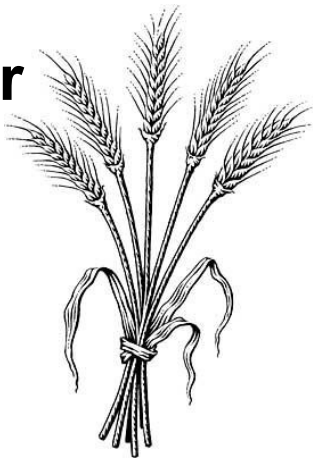
The Attitude of the Laborer in God's Harvest Field



I Corinthians 3:5-9

3-5-2023

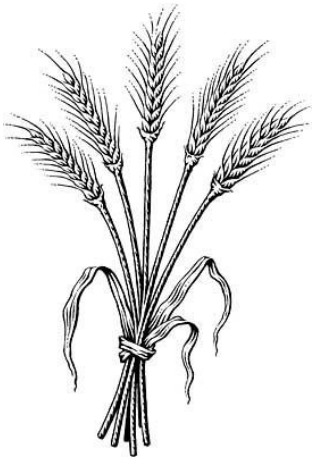
Introduction:

**** As you labor in God's Harvest Field, seeking to reap souls for Christ, HAVE A HUMBLE ATTITUDE ABOUT YOURSELF!***

I. ***View yourself as:***
A humble <u>SERVANT</u> commissioned by God (v.5)
(Needed in the Lord's Work: A spirit of <u>availability</u>)

II. ***View yourself as:***
A humble <u>FARMER</u> relying on God (v.6-7)
(Needed in the Lord's Work: A spirit of <u>dependency</u>)

III. ***View yourself as:***
A humble <u>CO-LABORER</u> working for God(v.8-9)
(Needed in the Lord's Work: A spirit of <u>unity</u>)



Conclusion: Remember Who the Lord of the Harvest really is, and GIVE HIM ALL THE GLORY!

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I Corinthians 3:5-9
3-5-2023

Introduction:

Pride is a killer!

One of the tendencies of carnal people is to give man the credit for a work that God did. This was the problem among the carnal Corinthians (3:3-4).

The ancient Greek philosopher said: "Humility is Truth" (being truthful about yourself and what you accomplish).

In chapter three, Paul illustrates the "Church" of believers in three ways: He calls the Church...

1) A FIELD , cultivated by men and blessed by God (3:5-9)

2) A BUILDING, resting on the foundation of Christ (3:9b-15)

3) A TEMPLE, in which God's Spirit dwells (3:16-23)

Several times in Scripture, God uses the imagery of the "field" to describe the world of humanity and the "seed" to describe the Word of God (Lk. 9; Mt. 13; Jn. 4:35 - *"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.")*

**** As you labor in God's Harvest Field, seeking to reap souls for Christ,***
HAVE A HUMBLE ATTITUDE ABOUT YOURSELF!

I. ***View yourself as:***
A humble SERVANT commissioned by God (v.5)
(Needed in the Lord's Work:A spirit of availability)

You can tell a lot about a person by how humble he is.

Paul did not seek the "limelight"; he did not want anyone to follow him or pledge allegiance to him.

Hence, he asks the question: *"Who then is Paul?. . ."* (implied: "Not what you made me out to be.")

"The world honors and tries to immortalize great men because men are the highest thing it knows. The world cannot see beyond itself." (MacArthur, p. 74).

"Ministers" - "It is a word which stresses the lowly character of the service rendered" (Morris, p. 65).

Diakonoi - Table waiter (bus boy).

Paul was saying in effect, "No one builds a movement around a waiter or busboy, or erects a monument to them. Apollos and I are just waiters or busboys whom the Lord used as servants to bring you food" (MacArthur, p. 74).

"Ministers" *(diakonoi)* - humble servants; household servants of God.

When you think of us, Paul says, don't view us as gods, angels, popes, elite clergy, etc., but rather view us as humble servants.

"By whom ye believed" - Through Paul's and Apollo's evangelism and discipleship, the Corinthians came to faith in Christ.

Paul says: God led you to belief by means of us. We were mere tools or instruments which God used to give you His Gospel and lead you to faith. (It is amazing that God would choose to use mere mortals to give His message and thereby initiate and build the faith of others. Are you being used to build someone's faith?).
--Does the surgeon's knife receive the glory for a successful operation, or does the doctor?

--Does the hammer receive the glory for a constructed building, or does the carpenter?

--Does the plow receive the credit for the harvested field, or does the farmer?

--Does the water pot receive the praise for a plant's growth, or does the gardener?
All we are, are the tools ("Channels Only"). God is the life-giver.

We are just "brushes or palettes in the Master's hands" (MacArthur, p. 74).

"Even as the Lord gave to every man" - It is the Lord who gives each one of u s the opportunity (NKJV), assigned task (NIV), and the gifts with which we can, as servants, build the faith of others.

God uses different instruments, different men, different talents, different approaches, different personalities. But everything still depends upon the blessing of the Spirit of God. And so Paul's admonition seems to be, Get your eyes off the instrument and place them alone on the Lord Jesus Christ (it is silly to childishly admire human personalities)." (DeHaan, p. 35).

"The Holy Spirit is the soulwinner; we are but a vessel He wants to use. As we labor in this God-commanded task, our total dependence must be upon His power, ability, and enablement. We are the vessel He desires to use, for He wants our minds, our hands, our feet, our lips to do the work of winning lost." (Dr. Ed Watke).

Are you available for God to use?

II. ***View yourself as:***
A humble FARMER relying on God (v.6-7)
(Needed in the Lord's Work:A spirit of dependency)

V. 6

"I have planted" - Paul initially gave the *"seed"* (Lk. 8:11) of God's Word to the Corinthians.

Faith does not always come immediately. Most often, people do not get saved the first time they hear the message.

"Apollos watered" - This is the work of continuing where someone else left off. Apollos continued the work Paul started.

Others, like Apollos, pick up where the pioneer left off.

Paul originally evangelized the city (Acts 18:1-18), whereas Apollos preached in Corinth later (Acts 18:24 - 19:1).

In our church, Pastor Doug Lowery planted, I am watering, but God has been giving the increase.

"Increase" - An agricultural term referring to life and growth. It is God who performs the miracle of new life and spiritual growth.

"God gave the increase" - lit. God was giving the increase (growth).

Paul used the Aorist tense when referring to how Paul *"planted"* and Apollos *"watered"*, but He switched to the imperfect to show how God was continually harvesting, during both the planting and watering.

Church growth is God's work. *"The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47).

People can plant and water, but God does a work which we cannot. He alone can prepare the "soil" of one's heart.

--He opens the heart (EX: Lydia, Acts 16:14)

--He alone can regenerate the heart and produce a changed life

Four basic steps before harvesting:

1) Cultivating the soil
   How?
   a. Pray for people
   b. Show compassion to people
   c. Build trust with people

   (Your life can *"adorn"* the Gospel (Ti. 2:10), but only God can convince men of its worth and truth)

2) Sowing the seed
   How?
   a. Making initial contact
   b. Sharing your testimony
   c. Handing out tracts and Gospel literature
   d. Allowing the listener to hear the clear, simple Gospel

3) Watering the soil and seed
   How?
   a. Follow-up visitation
   b. Giving basic Bible doctrines which build faith
   c. Living a life which is consistent with the message you proclaim

   How do we "*water"*? Answer: One way is with tears of compassion (Ps. 126:5-6 - *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.")*

4) Waiting for God to produce life and growth
   How?
   a. Remain patient
      Be patient! It takes time to cultivate, plant, water, and harvest.

   b. Don't force decisions from people
      You are not responsible for the results -- God is! We are only responsible for planting and watering.

      Encourage, but don't force people to put their faith in Christ. Many so-called "conversions" will amount to *"wood, hay, and stubble"* because we attempted to coerce an *"increase"* rather than allow the Holy Spirit to produce the harvest.

   c. Trust God to convict and convince

V. 6

"Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9)

We are regenerated, saved, and sanctified by His Spirit.

It is because of God's sovereign working in our lives (yea, through the instrumentality of men) that we are members of the King's family.

V. 7

Both Paul and Apollos add up to a "zero" (nothing, nil) (without Christ) (SEE: DeHaan, p. 35-36)

Only He can germinate life within a dead sinner and nourish that regenerated soul (He is the ultimate source and sustainer of life) (Gromacki, p. 46).

SEE: I Cor. 1:30-31

All glory must go to God.

All that we <u>have</u> and all that we <u>are</u> is from Him (I Cor. 4:7).

Who is really <u>important</u>?

"He must increase, I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

III. ***View yourself as:***
A humble CO-LABORER working for God(v.8-9)
(Needed in the Lord's Work:A spirit of unity)

V. 8
"He that planteth and he that watereth are one" - It was absurd for the Corinthians to take sides since both Paul and Apollos were one - a unit - a team.

The work of the Gospel ministry is a team effort. We all have different gifts, functions, and jobs, but we all have the same:
aim - God's glory
motivation - the love of Christ
result - fruit for God's Kingdom

Paul is saying: I and Apollos are not rivals; we are *"one."*

Though we have distinctive contributions in the same work, we are one in that work.

Though we have diversity of service, there is unity of purpose.

We are preaching the same Scriptures, about the same Christ, through the same power (of the Holy Spirit), for the same purpose (seeing people saved), having the same goal (for God to be glorified).

"Every man shall receive his own reward" - Even though we are a team, we each will receive individual recognition and reward.

"Reward" - SEE: John 4:35-38

"According to his own labor" - Salvation is a free gift (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8), not the result of our labor or *"works"* (Ti. 3:5). However, our service for Christ will be rewarded, and God's rewards will not be arbitrarily (haphazardly) given out.

Jesus Christ knows our works (Rev. 2:2). Nothing you do for another soul will go unrewarded. The measure and motive of your labor will merit reward. No matter what part you have, whether cultivating, planting, watering, reaping, etc., you will not go unrewarded.

One who prayed for a soul will be rewarded just as one who witnessed to that soul.

God rewards on the basis of labor, not success or results.

Contrast:Jeremiah (faithful and dedicated prophet) had little results (over a life of ministry)

Jonah (petty and unwilling prophet) saw a whole city repent (over a couple of days of ministry)

What men may think of your ministry is not important; what God thinks is of supreme importance.

Our reward must not be the praise of men, but the "Well Done!" of the Lord of the harvest (Wiersbe, p. 579).

God's award ceremony will be:
1) Universal (***"Every man"*** - every single child of God)

2) Sure (***"Shall"***)

3) Fair (***"According to his own labor"***)

V. 9
The greatest labor is the labor in the greatest task.

No task is greater than the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 1:8).

In every city there awaits a field to be cultivated, planted, watered, reaped, and harvested.

--There is fruit for God in the city of NY, but more laborers are needed to work the field (Luke 10:2 - *"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.")*

"We" - Paul and Apollos

"Labourers together" - fellow workers. We are God's fellow workers.

In the work of God, there is no room for a competitive spirit, no room for strife and vain glory. We are on the same team, seeking to reap the same harvest field, for the same Master.

"Ye are God's husbandry" - i.e. God's tillage, working field, cultivated land.

Paul says we are God's farmers and you (Corinthians) are God's field.

This church is God's church; you are God's field and God's building (edifice). The reason you are God's field is because He produced you (you are His "produce"). You are God's building because He constructed you; you are built on the foundation of Christ (v. 11).
Conclusion:

Remember Who the Lord of the Harvest really is, and
GIVE HIM ALL THE GLORY!

It is God's work, wrought by God's power, therefore it should be to God's glory (not man's).

Give God the glory! (I Cor. 10:31)

To God be the glory!