

Title: **REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED**
 LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

Text: John 4:35-38

Subject: *Biblical Motives for Missions*
 and Evangelism

Date: Sunday Morning — December 28, 2008

Tape: John #35

Reading: *Psalm 126:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 4:18-6:2*

Introduction:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” — If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God’s salvation is yours, you have eternal life.

- Trust Christ shed blood as your only and all-sufficient atonement for sin.
- Trust his obedience as your only righteousness.
- Trust his grace as your only hope.
- Trust him, and salvation is yours.

This is the message we preach, the message we endeavor to make known in all the world.

We spend an enormous amount of time, energy, and money for the preaching of the gospel. **Through your generosity...**

- This local church regularly supports faithful missionaries and their families, in Mexico, New Guinea and the Virgin Islands.
- We host our annual **Sovereign Grace Bible Conference** (29th last September).
- We assist in the publication and distribution of gospel literature in Great Britain, the Ivory Coast of Africa, France, Russia and Italy.
- Our **Grace Bulletin** magazine is mailed around the world every two months.
- Everything I write and every sermon I preach is posted on the Internet. — www.DonFortner.com — www.FreegRACErADIO.COM — www.Sovereign-GraceArticles.com — www.Grace-for-Today.com.
- We post the messages of 37 other gospel preachers every week on **FreeGraceRadio.com** (239,000 Sermon Downloads).
- Some of our men play the messages preached here on our local television several times each week.
- We help to support pastors of local churches in this country.

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

- We send hundreds of books and literally thousands of cassette and CDs, video tapes and DVDs around the world every year.

In addition to these things, you send your pastor wherever he is needed to preach the gospel, assist other pastors and assist other groups desiring to establish gospel churches. You give generously and regularly for the furtherance of the gospel. And I never hesitate to ask you to do so. I never ask anything from you, or anyone else for myself. But I do not hesitate to ask you to give for the furtherance of the gospel.¹

I give myself arduously to the work of the ministry. Shelby gives her time (50-60 hours of her time every week, — often more), assisting me in the work of getting the message of God's grace out to this generation. Why? Why expend such effort? Why go to the trouble?

- Why would **Darvin Pruitt** quit his job, cash in his retirement, sell his house and move to Taylor, AR?
- Why on this earth would a man like **Clay Curtis** give up a good, secure job, sell his house, pack his wife and children up and move his family to Princeton, NJ?
- Why would **Fred Evans**, a school teacher in Houston, TX, quit his job, take his wife and children, leave, his family, his friends, and everybody he knows in this world, and move to Louisville, KY?
- **Why are you**, sensible, hard working men and women, willing to do without some of the comforts and pleasures you can afford, so that you can give your money away?
- What makes a man like **Walter Groover** quit a good paying job, leave a comfortable house, and move to his wife and children Mexico?
- Why would his son **Cody** do the very same thing, just when his carrier was on the fast track?
- Why would Cliff and Martie Hellar (in their 80s!) be headed back to Papua. New Guinea?

I want to answer those questions in my message today, and try to inspire others to do the same thing. If you are taking notes, the title of my message is – **REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED — LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP**. If you will turn with me to John 4:35-38, I want to

¹ Every dime that is received by us is distributed around the world for the preaching of the gospel. Nothing is kept in reserve.

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

talk to you about biblical motives for missions and evangelism. Any time men and women are called upon to do something unusual, to make sacrifices for a cause, they must have something to motivate them. I call upon you to devote your lives to the cause of Christ, to devote everything God has put in your hands, to the furtherance of the gospel, the salvation of God's elect and the building of Christ's kingdom, and I call upon myself to do the same, because this is the only opportunity we have to do so.

(John 4:35-38) "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. (36) And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. (37) And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. (38) I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors."

Proposition: Here our Savior tells us that one great motive for all evangelistic, missionary endeavor is just this. – The time is now. This is the time of opportunity.

The Master here tells us that we are never to think or act as if there is some future time for evangelization. He says, "*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.*"

I call upon you, each of you, I call upon this church, and I call myself, I call upon each of us who have experienced the mercy, love and grace of God in Christ to devote ourselves anew to the business of preaching the gospel. Let us indeed be his witnesses at home and abroad. Let us, like David of old (Acts 13:36), serve our generation according to the will of God. This is our mission. This is the calling, vocation and life work of every child of God in this world. The Lord has left us here to serve this one purpose. He has left us here to preach the gospel, to make Christ known in the generation in which we live.

Divisions: I want to show you three things in the text we have read.

1. The Reasons
2. The Rewards

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

3. The Reapers

THE REASONS

First, let me show you the reasons given in Holy Scripture for this great work. Without question, there are many, many more reasons and motives for evangelism and missions than I can give in this message. I have had to limit myself to just a few of the most prominent. But, after much thoughtful, prayerful consideration, I have selected seven noble reasons for this great work. Here are seven things which should constantly motivate us in the work God has given us to do.

1. **The Glory of God** (1 Corinthians 10:31)

(1 Corinthians 10:31-33) “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.”

2. **The Great Commission**

We have our orders from our Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ. The orders are crystal clear, we are, everyone of us who are born of God, to go forth into all the world preaching the gospel. These orders are given numerous times, in one way or another, through the Scriptures. But they are specifically recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the Book of Acts. In each place the emphasis is different. But the orders are the same.

- **Matthew** (28:19-20) **emphasizes the authority of Christ as Lord and King**. – “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel.*”
- **Mark’s emphasis is the wrath of God and salvation from it.**

(Mark 16:15-16) “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

- **Luke (24:44-49) presents the great commission as the fulfilling of the Old Testament Scriptures.**

(Luke 24:46-48) “And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.”

- **In John’s account, the Savior’s commission is given to us in connection with his own commission from the Father.** — “*As my Father hath sent me into the world, so send I you*” (20:21).
- **In the Book of Acts, the great commission is specifically stated as the program and purpose of Christ’s church and Kingdom in this world** (Acts 1:8).

(Acts 1:8) “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

3. **The Wrath of God** (2 Corinthians 5:10-11)

The fact is, you who are without Christ are lost. You are under the wrath of God. All who are ignorant of God, ignorant of Christ, ignorant of the gospel are lost. Did you hear what I said?

- Our sons and daughters are going to hell!
- Our mothers and fathers are about to meet an angry God in judgment!
- Our neighbors and friends are under the wrath of God!
- The world around us is perishing!
- Let us love our enemies and do good to those who spitefully use us, just as we do our own families, doing the most compassionate thing we possibly can for them. – Preach the gospel to them!

(2 Corinthians 5:10-11) “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. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”

4. **The Love of Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:14)

(2 Corinthians 5:14-21) “For **the love of Christ constraineth** 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. *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, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing 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: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. *21* **For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**”

5. **The Opportunity We Have** (John 4:35)

(John 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.”

We ought to be motivated in the work of preaching the gospel by the opportunity which each succeeding day thrusts upon us. Do you recall our Lord’s promise, when he gave the commission? He said, “*Lo! I am with you alway!*” He promised us his presence; and it is his presence with us which gives us the opportunity. It is Christ’s presence that makes our opportunities. It is his presence which opens doors of utterance for the gospel and makes them effectual.

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

In our text, the Master speaks in a parabolic manner. It is common for men to plow a field and sow their seed and then wait (about 4 months) for the harvest. But our Lord here tells us that in the work of the gospel, we must never labor with the notion that the harvest is for another day. Rather, **we are to labor in his vineyard in the expectation of an immediate harvest**, because we are reapers where others have sowed and others will reap where we sow, sheaves of harvests gathered from seed sown by someone else.

Yes, we cast our bread upon the waters, knowing that it shall return in due time; but while we are casting, the bread cast by someone else is returning. Yes, we go forth in the morning scattering the precious seed of the gospel, with weeping hearts; but we go forth with the joyful prospect of coming back in the evening bearing our sheaves of harvest.

This is exactly what was promised in the Old Testament prophecies of this gospel age, when Messiah is present upon his throne in his Kingdom (Leviticus 26:5; Psalm 126:5-6; Amos 9:13).

(Leviticus 26:5) “And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.”

(Psalms 126:5-6) “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. (6) He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.”

(Amos 9:13) “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”

6. The Election of Grace (2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1-3)

The purpose of God in election and predestination assures us that our labor in the Lord is not and cannot be in vain. The apostle Paul frequently referred to God’s purpose of grace in election as his motive in preaching.

(2 Timothy 1:1) “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.”

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

(2 Timothy 1:8-12) “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: 11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

(Titus 1:1-3) “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior.”

7. **The Honor Of Service** (Ephesians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 1:26-31)

(Ephesians 3:8) “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That,

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

THE REWARDS

Second, in verse 36, our Lord speaks plainly about the rewards which shall be given to those who serve the interests of his Kingdom, to those who serve the souls of men for the glory of God by the gospel.

(John 4:36) “And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”

- **The wages we shall receive are the souls of men.**

(1 Thessalonians 2:19) “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

- **The fruit we gather is everlasting.** — Ours is no ordinary work. Ours is not a labor of temporary significance. Oh, no! The fruit we gather is “*unto life eternal.*” Yes, what we are doing is of everlasting importance to the souls of men — and of everlasting importance to the glory of the Triune God!

THE REAPERS

Now, just briefly, in the *third* place, notice what our Lord tells us about the reapers (John 4:36-38)

(John 4:36-38) “And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.”

These verses tell us several things we need to always bear in mind.

1. All God’s servants are one.

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

2. It matters not whether we sow or reap. Actually, all who sow do some reaping and all who reap do some sowing.
3. He who sows and he who reaps are alike insignificant. – God gives the increase!

APPLICATION

I cannot speak for you, but I consider myself a debtor. I have the medicine a dying world needs. If I were to keep it to myself, I would be guilty of the highest crime imaginable, the everlasting ruin of immortal souls!

(Romans 1:14-17) “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. *15* So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. *16* For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. *17* For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

Let’s look at our text one more time, each one asking God the Holy Spirit to apply it to his or her own heart by his grace.

(John 4:35-38) “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. *(36)* And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. *(37)* And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. *(38)* I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.”

O my soul, let it never be said of me, “*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and thou art not saved*” (Jeremiah 8:20). As in nature there is a seed time and harvest, so it is in grace. And we are told, that the Lord has given “*the appointed weeks of harvest*” (Jeremiah 5:24). Is the closing of this year for me the appointed time of harvest? Is it for you the appointed time?

REAPING WHERE OTHERS LABORED
LABORING FOR OTHERS TO REAP

As the wheat ripens it becomes more golden and weighty. The fuller and riper the grain, the more it bends toward the earth. So it is with the child of God. As he grows in the grace and knowledge of Christ, he is ripened for the garner of heaven. The more he filled with spiritual life, the lower he becomes in his own eyes and Christ Jesus is increasingly precious and exalted. And when the Lord signals that it is his harvest-time, the believing sinner comes to the grave “*like a shock of corn in his season*” (Job 5:26).

(Job 5:26) “Thou shalt come to *thy* grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.”

Blessed Savior, Lord of the harvest! We beseech Thee, carry on your work of grace in our hearts, and let your gospel ever abide in our hearts as good seed cast into ground made good by your grace, springing up, growing and fruitful! Oh, prepare us for the harvest! When you put forth your sickle, may we be gathered into your garner in heaven!

Amen.