

## Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?

*Mt 9:37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. 10:1 ¶ And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

After a night in prayer our Lord Jesus chose from among the disciples twelve laborers to go into the ripe fields to harvest in the souls of men. (cf. Lk.6.12, 13) He said, *Pray ye therefore*, because the harvest is plenteous and the laborers are few, *that he will send laborers into his harvest*. As he spoke these words there were standing before Him multitudes of people worn and weary and having no one to guide them through the dangerous courses of life. And He has compassion on them.

*Mt 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

*fainted*, ἐκκελυμένοι, nom. masc. pl. part. perf. pass. of ἐκλύω, ἐκ of, out, out of, forth + λύω, *broken, dissolved, loosed*; always tss. *fainted* (6), and referring to being, Mt.15.32, physically wearied; Gal.6.9; He.12.3, 5, to become broken by something which seems very contradictory to what we *think* ought to be; here *'they had fainted.'*

The children of Israel were being taken advantage of by the religious leaders of the day, having none to care for them and to teach them the true doctrines of God. This was the sad state of affairs in the day when Christ came to His own.

*were scattered*, ἐρριμμένοι, nom. masc. pl. part. perf. pass. of ῥίπτω; KJV, to be *scattered* like sheep (Mt.9.36), to *cast down* the weak, sick, possessed at Jesus' feet (Mt.15.30), or to *cast down* the pieces of silver (Mt.27.5), the devil *had thrown* one down (Lk.4.35);

## Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?

to *cast off* clothes as a show of strong objection (Acts 22.23), to *cast out* the tackling of the ship (Acts 27.19), and to *cast out* the anchor (Acts 27.29).

So, Jesus had compassion upon the wandering souls of men that were as sheep without a shepherd. At this He chose twelve men to begin laboring in this harvest. These laborers take to the ripe fields with the gospel of the kingdom and the doctrine of God. This is the work to which the Lord calls certain men. As we move past the history of Christ's personal ministry with the apostles this laborer is identified by the term *pastor*. He is one in whom God puts the desire for the office of a bishop (1Ti.3.1); one who has a heart for the people of God; especially those that congregate together in Jesus' name, which constitute one of His churches. God has imparted to such men the desire to preach the gospel and to instruct those which believe concerning the truths of God's word. Men called of the Lord into this work begin to demonstrate their desire for it by what they do. Now someone might object by saying that those which Christ chose that day were not proved before being called to service. And that is true to a certain extent. We do know that these men had repented at the preaching of John the Baptist and were baptized, waiting for the appearing of the Christ of God. But the teaching of the N.T., which follows these gospel accounts, is clear that men appointed to this office and to this work must be first proved,

tested, δοκιμαζέσθωσαν, **3ppl. pres. imper. pass.** of δοκιμάζω), *let be proved or tested.*

then let them serve

διακονείτωσαν, **3ppl. pres. imper.** of διακονέω (*let them use the office of a deacon*); *let them minister or serve*

*being [found]*

ἄντες, nom. pl. masc. part. pres. of εἰμί, to be,  
*blameless.*

## Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?

1Ti.3.10, not sinless, but blameless, ἀνέγκλητοι, nom. pl. masc., noun, ἀνέγκλητος, also tss. *unreproveable*; a form of this in the verb is ἐγκαλέω, KJV, *to be called in question, accused*.

There are Biblical prerequisites established in the N.T. Scriptures which are to be placed alongside of prospective laborers which help each church discern the fitness of those who profess to be called to labor in the word and doctrine.

According to 1Ti.2.24; 3.1-7, 10; Tit.1.6-9; this *workmen* should be a matured, grown man (not a novice), once-only married and having children, blameless, vigilant, sober, modest, able to entertain strangers (φιλόξενον, a lover of strangers), able to teach (διδασκτικόν, again in 2Ti.2.24), not disposed to drinking,

πάροινον, παρά by, near, with, from, at + οἶνος, wine; also Tit.1.7; with the negative, μὴ, undisposed to wine

not a hireling, but patient and gentle, loves *good things*, just, holy, temperate, not a striker, brawler or covetous, having a well-ordered house with well-behaved children, holding fast the faithful word, and having a good testimony of those outside of the church of which he is presently a member. Once these things *are tested, proven* then he may be appointed by the church to enter the ministry of the Lord and His word. Without question this describes the quality that ought to be found in every believer. But it is not always so, and sometimes for reasons over which we have no control whatsoever. The preacher is not better or greater than any other member of the congregation that he is a part of, but the Lord does require of him this much in order to serve in this capacity. This behavior is to describe your preacher.

Today, doctrine has been greatly de-emphasized and programs have taken the preeminence.

I watched a young woman, who ought to know better, praise the Lord for a church service that appeared more like a platform for performers and actors than a place for worshipping and hearing the word of God. This is what and some of the upcoming men and women around us are aspiring to.

## *Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?*

This is what they want their church to be like. And what is lost? Sound doctrine! When sound doctrine is compromised so goes sound, holy, separate, Christian living. The church is more than a bunch of moral people getting together doing good things. The church is to be obedient to Christ in every respect. It is to preserve Jesus Christ's manner of life and doctrine.

That the laborer is to be first tested in his teaching doesn't mean that He has all of the answers. It does not mean that he knows every jot and tittle about everything Bible. It does not mean that he has learned all that he will ever learn before he may begin this service. It doesn't mean that he has reached the height of his spirituality. But it does mean that he has been able to prove that he has the discipline to keep himself and to keep his studies; that he has a basic grasp of the truths of God's word so that he can help the saints over which he *hopes* the Holy Ghost will make Him an overseer. Churches aren't in need of story tellers. They need men who are not only *teachable*, but that can teach sound doctrine.

*2Ti 3:14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ...*

This man will be a man of the Book. He spends much time prayerfully in the pages of the Bible; he has learned and can communicate to others the doctrines of Christ.

*Tit 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

*Tit 2:1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: 2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things ...*

*Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ...*

## *Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?*

This body of believers, this church of God is the appointed means of the Lord for preserving the truth of His word in the world. If the churches do not know what God's word says, then who can know it? Beyond question, those beyond a true church relationship have a very distorted view and understanding of God's word. The churches are the *pillar and ground of the truth!* The workmen of the Lord who are called to labor in behalf of Christ in one of His churches must teach Bible doctrine. There are some men that stand before the saints and never teach doctrine. They might give an inspirational thought that relates to some text in the Bible, and that's alright. There is a place for that. But that is not the diet that Lord would have His servants feed to His church. They must have food. They must be taught doctrine. Whoever said doctrine doesn't matter, or that doctrine divides is either making excuse for his own laziness to study, or has no love for the truth of God's word. But yes, doctrine does divide between truth and error. But true doctrine solidifies, unites those who love the truth.

What is doctrine? Doctrine is teaching that comes from comparing Scripture with Scripture. For example, if two texts agree on a particular point then they testify to a thought which form a doctrine or teaching. There are many doctrines in the word of God that are salted throughout the Bible which the churches ought to know. The doctrines of soteriology (study of salvation), hamartology (study of sin), Christology (study of Christ), ecclesiology (study of the church), theology (study of God), eschatology (study of prophecy and last things), etc., should be taught. The saints need to know the very basic teachings of God's word. They need to know about about creation, the flood, mankind, spirits, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. God's laborers must be able to inform the churches about these Bible teachings. Until a man proves the reality of the calling of God upon His life by doing this he should not be appointed to serve in the pastoral office. He might be a great brother-in-the-Lord in every other respect but he is not suited to function in this office until he has proved the gifts and calling of God upon his life. Now, there are primarily two methods that we use here for teaching.

## *Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?*

First, there is expositional preaching. This method explains the context and the sense of the verses while moving sequentially, verse by verse through passages of Scripture. John Gill's Commentary, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* is the greatest example of expository writing. Preaching like this would be expository preaching. This preaching/teaching method leads the congregation through a text, a chapter, or a book verse by verse. My personal experience using this method has been that as doctrines present themselves we may take the opportunity to stop and exhaust that *subject*, or, if we have been on that point recently, I make a brief statement to remind the saints of it, and proceed to the next verses. This method is very helpful. It keeps the preacher from making the pulpit his personal 'hobby horse,' or from being *repetitive, stuck in a rut, or stale* because it is the Scripture which determines the topic, the doctrine, the thoughts to be shared during our time together. By use of this method, both the preacher and the congregation are always reminded to consider the Scripture in the light of the context in which it is found. For this reason expository preaching is a great aid for laying aside common errors, which a constant diet of topical preaching might not do as readily.

Second, there is the topical preaching method. This is a good method too, though it is my opinion that this method should be used in conjunction with expository preaching. Charles Spurgeon comes to mind as probably one of the greatest topical preachers there ever was. Great brethren use this method almost exclusively and have been able to gird up the minds of the saints with the doctrine of Christ. This method is a great instrument for systematically catechizing the congregation. But again, it is my opinion that it should be used in conjunction with expository preaching. Both methods have their place in instructing the saints.

Christ would have his laborers to teach His little flocks. The workman must be impressed with an urgency to sacrifice whatever it takes to fulfill this task. I think it is true that these men will discover that 'others may, but you may not.' It is a good work! The Bible says it is. (1Ti.3.1) If ever there was a work of faith this is one of them. Not everyone can and not everyone should take up this work.

## Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?

Brethren, pray for laborers, laborers which have proved that they can instruct us in the doctrines of Christ. Always remember this if the time comes, and the Lord wills, that you must select another servant. There lies before the churches very difficult days just before the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many deceitful workers whose desire is to take advantage of God's people and lead them away from the faith of Christ for many reasons: power & personal gain. (2Pe.2.14, 15) Their errors aren't all glaring errors. They are often very subtle, using only enough of the word of God, turning it with a very little twist so that it no longer says what it should have said. The laborers of the Lord must be able to withstand these false teachers and expose their heresies by a right use of the word of God.

*Tit 1:10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

Emotional arguments, programs, family and friendly relationships aren't enough to keep the believing in the faith of Christ. But we know that it is in instances when heresies arise that the true servants of the Lord will be manifested.

*1Co 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

It is partly through the efforts of faithful ministers that the churches continue to be a bright and shining light in a very dark world. Have you been called of the Lord to work in this field?

*2Ti 2:15 Study to shew*

*σπούδασον, 2ps. aor. imper. of ,σπευδάζω, KJV, endeavor, be forward, be diligent, labor; σπεύδω, KJV, to haste.*

*to shew, παραστήσαι, aor. infin. of παρίστημι, παρά to be near, by, with, at + ἵστημι, to be established, stand, appoint; to stand by, to prove with, to commend, present, show.*

## *Praying for Laborers: Who Are They & What Do They Do?*

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*thyslf approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

*rightly dividing, ὀρθοτομοῦντα, acc. sing. masc. part. pres. of ὀρθοτομέω, ὀρθός straight + τέμνω, to cut.*

*1Ti 3:10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.*

This is the laborer we should pray for the Lord to give to the churches. This is the work that they are called to do. They are to first prove that they are fit and able for service; then they may be appointed by the church for the church. God bless the word to our hearts and minds. Thank you.