

“The Farmer”
2 Timothy 2:6-7
(Preached at Trinity, April 24, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In these verses Paul describes the life of a follower of Christ using three metaphors. That of a soldier, of an athlete, and of a farmer. Although speaking of the ministry in particular, it also applies to the work of every Christian.
2. First, we saw that the laborer of Jesus Christ is a good soldier
 - A. The good soldier is actively engaged in the war
 - B. The good soldier is not hindered by hardship.
 - C. The good soldier stays focused – he is not distracted.
 - D. He strives to please his Commander
3. Second of all, the laborer of Jesus Christ is like an athlete.
 - A. I in the Greek games there were three qualifications that every athlete had to meet.
 1. Proper birth – he had to be a true born Greek
 2. Proper training – he had to train for at least 10 months and swear before a statue of Zeus that he had
 3. Proper competition – he had to compete according to the rules of the given event
 - B. Christians also have to meet these three qualifications
 1. Proper birth - It is essential that the laborer in the Gospel first be converted – the new birth.
 2. Proper training
 - a. Biblical study
 - b. Attention to spiritual disciplines
 3. We must conduct our work lawfully – by the rules.
Proper methodology – we must use the biblical means
 - a. The Christian must strictly follow the rules
 - b. Christ gave us not only the message but the method
We must preach the Word of God – faith comes by hearing.
4. This brings us to the third metaphor. In **Verse 6** Paul describes the Christian laborer as a farmer. It is a simple single verse with profound meaning.
2 Timothy 2:6 NAU - "The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops."
Agricultural metaphors are common in the Bible.
We have vineyards and vines and fruit bearing. We have trees and branches. We have wheat and threshing floors. We have seed and harvests. We also have laborers.
The spreading of God's Word is referred to as the sowing of seed.
The gathering of souls is referred to as a harvest.
5. Paul is continuing this long tradition. The Christian laborer is referred to as a farmer.

I. This farmer is described as “hard-working”

A. He must toil long and hard.

1. The gospel demands much labor
The word for “hard-working” is κοπιᾶω - to grow weary, tired, exhausted
2. There is the planting and watering – the sowing of seed and careful nurturing – the labor for souls in an intensive work.
3. The three metaphors share a common trait – endurance.
The soldier is engaged until the end.
The athlete runs until he crosses the finish line.
The farmer labors until the harvest is complete.
4. With a farmer there is no time for rest or hesitation – he starts early and works late
 - a. The farmer is on a strict schedule. There is a time for planting and a time for harvest. If either time is missed there will be no reward. No farmer schedules a vacation during planting or harvest seasons.
 - b. The Christian laborer must labor without ceasing his entire life. Those who are temporary laborers are in a dangerous position.
Luke 9:62 NAU - "But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

B. We too are on a strict schedule

1. Souls are dying daily – today may be the only day we have
2 Corinthians 6:1-2 NAU - "And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain-- ² for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation "
2. There is a harvest to be gathered
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.”
3. We have the additional burden of being few among so great a harvest
John 4:35 NAU - "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest '? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest."
 - a. This has been a common problem from the beginning
It is particularly true in our age of nominal Christianity
Many think others will do the work.
 - b. God works through instrumentality – notice Jesus did not say, “The laborers are few but that’s OK, God can bless a few so that they will accomplish as much as many.”
Jesus believed that God works through means and that the gospel would be spread through the united efforts of many – that many laborers would be needed to bring in a bountiful harvest.
 - c. Although God could bring in the harvest of elect without men He will not do it

- D. The Christian work is a group effort.
1. This doesn't diminish the importance of the individual.
Paul says here the farmer is first to enjoy the fruits of his labors.
 2. But farming is labor intensive. It takes many to complete the task.
Evangelism is not for a select few – it is required of all
1 Corinthians 3:6-9 NAU - "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷ So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."
 2. This grand and glorious Gospel has been entrusted to each of us
And what a sacred trust. We preach Christ.
- E. The Christian farmer must toil in every condition - even in times of drought,
1. There are droughts, periods in which there is little or no harvest due to the absence of rain. In spite of much labor there is only a tiny harvest.
The US is in a current state of drought – as of Dec. 7 46 % of the US is in drought conditions. That's 183 million acres. Areas flooded when Hoover Dam was constructed are now dry ground – entire towns that haven't been seen in a generation.
 2. There are dry periods in the harvest of souls as well.
The faithful worker is consistent in both times of bounty when multitudes are fleeing to Christ and famine when people are content in their sin.
It demands much patience
- II. The farmer is the first to partake of the fruits of his labors – What are these fruits?
- A. The praise of the master – we are working in a field that belongs to another
Matthew 25:21 NAU - "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'"
1. This is our chief goal in all things. We saw this with the soldier.
2 Timothy 2:4 – "that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."
 2. It is important to know that Jesus takes notice of our labors – both individually and as a church
Revelation 2:1-3 NAU - "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ² 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.'"
 3. Paul said he expected to receive a crown from our Lord
2 Timothy 4:8 NAU - "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

- B. Another fruit of our labor will be the quality of our harvest.
1. There are different types of harvest.
 Jesus told the Parable of the Wheat and Tares—weeds growing among the wheat. The weeds are useless.
Matthew 13:30 NAU - "Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."
 Woe to the church that is content with filling the pews with tares.
 2. Jesus told another parable called the Parable of the Sower.
 He told of those who might seem to be genuine at first but they proved temporary.
Matthew 13:20-22 NAU - "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
 Christian farming demands patience.
 3. Paul also warned of the danger of perverting the Gospel of Christ by adding worthless things to it. The quality of our work will be made manifest on the Day of Judgment.
1 Corinthians 3:10-13 NAU - "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work."
- C. Another fruit of our labor will be the joy of the harvest and the joy of watching the crops grow.
1. Paul was in constant remembrance of their growth in grace.
1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,"
 2. Paul considered his converts his crown
Philippians 4:1 NAU - "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to* see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."

- D. This has particular application to the Pastor
1. He is to go into the field with a sharp blade – not with soft flattering words, but with truth calling sin sin. Preaching must go to the conscience where it cuts
 2. But then he must bind the harvest together – comforting those that mourn and edifying them in the holy faith.
 3. Finally, he must bring his harvest into the barn

Conclusion:

1. Paul concludes this section by exhorting Timothy, "Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."
2. We must meditate upon these things and consider our own lives under the direction of God
 - a. Are you as willing to suffer hardship as a soldier fighting a war? Or do the cares of this life continue to draw you from the battle?
 - b. Are you as disciplined as an athlete preparing for the contest? Or are you continually giving in to the desires of your own flesh?
 - c. Are you as dedicated as a farmer laboring to bring in the harvest? Or are you prone to slumber while the crops lie in the field.
3. Whether described as a soldier, and athlete, or a farmer the Christian life demands perseverance. The Christian is in a full-time work. This isn't just a spare-time endeavor. We must give ourselves wholly to a life of excellence as the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as a part-time Christian.