

Titles of Christians (12)
Farmers
2 Timothy 2:6
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Today we are going to study another title of Christians.

^{NASB} **2 Timothy 2:6** The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. (2Ti 2:6 NASB)

Here Apostle Paul compares Christians to the hard-working farmer. Farmers usually have to work very hard. Even though nowadays there are all kinds of modern agricultural machinery to help farmers, they still have to work harder than people in other professions. Here Christians are compared to hard-working farmers, we have to prepare to work hard.

We are compared to farmers, what are we supposed to do?

1. We ask Yahweh God to change the hearts of people

^{NIV} **Matthew 13:3 – 4** Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.” (Mat 13:3 – 4 NIV)

Here the Lord Jesus is teaching a parable about a farmer; he expects his disciples to be spiritual farmers (Please read Pastor Eric Chang’s sermon on this parable at www.christiandc.org, I will not repeat all the explanations here).

The farmer went out to sow seed; some seed fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. What does the seed stand for?

^{NASB} **Matthew 13:18 – 19** Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.” (Mat 13:18-19 NASB)

Here the Lord Jesus explains the meaning of this parable. The seed is compared to the word of the kingdom of God. When people hear the word but don’t understand it, the evil one comes and

snatches away the word sown in his heart. It is like the seed that was sown beside the road, the birds came and ate them up.

When we preach the message of the kingdom to people, we will certainly want the message to stay in their hearts; we don't want the message to be snatched away by the evil one. What then shall we do?

Please take notice here, that in Matthew 13:19 the Lord says, "When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path."

It is because people don't understand the message about the kingdom that the evil one can snatch it away. But if the people understand the message, what then will happen?

^{NIV} **Matthew 13:23** But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." (Mat 13:23 NIV)

If people understand the message, they will bear fruit, and will produce a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

The difference between these two types of result is the heart of people. If their heart is good, the seed sown in their heart will produce a crop; but if their heart is no good, they won't even understand the message, then the evil one will snatch away the message. Therefore we have to work in the hearts of people to make their hearts good so that they may accept the message of the kingdom.

The hearts of most people in the world are hardened; they think they know everything. They are good people, they don't commit serious sins, so they feel they don't need the salvation of God, and they don't accept the word of God even if we preach the word to them. I used to be like this kind of people. (Please read my testimony "Goodness and Lovingkindness Will Follow Me All the Days of My Life" at www.christiandc.org).

When people don't accept the word of God, the evil one will snatch it away. By contrast, if people are receptive to the word of God, the evil one won't be able to snatch it away so easily.

A good farmer has to till the soil before he sows the seed. Correspondingly we the spiritual farmers have to soften the hearts of people before we preach the gospel to them.

Some people simply don't want to have anything to do with Christianity, maybe they have been affected by some bad experiences in the past, or they may have been hurt by some Christians, or they may have heard bad things about Christianity. For example, some people think that Christianity is a western European religion. As a result, some of those living in the former European colonies can be quite hostile to Christianity. We have to explain to them that Christianity is not a western religion, for the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Israel. He is an Israelite. Christianity started in Israel and then spread to places like Ethiopia in Africa and then to Europe and all over the world.

People can be affected by various things, so they don't want to listen to the gospel. We have to ask Yahweh God to change their hearts and grant us the insight to understand their hearts. We need to have the patience and love to help them. We are ready to accept attacks, insults, and even hatred. I have been insulted a lot, I don't know why some people hate me so much, I didn't offend them, I simply preach the word of God according to the Bible. Even though people hated me and insulted me, I didn't fight back, I put my head down and continued to preach to them. I like to share my testimony with them (Please refer to my testimony "Goodness and Lovingkindness Will Follow Me All the Days of My Life" at www.christiandc.org). Through my own life experience, I tell people about the truth and the love of Yahweh God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the first point, that we ask Yahweh God to change the hearts of people.

2. Planting and watering

First we till the soil (the soil refers to people's heart), and when the soil is ready, we then go to the next step, planting and watering.

^{NASB} **1 Corinthians 3:6 – 7** 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. (1Co 3:6-7 NASB)

Here Apostle Paul says he planted, which means that he preached the word of God to people; then another servant Apollos watered it. First we show our love to people, encouraging them and helping them in their need. We give testimonies and tell true stories to soften their hearts. Once their hearts are ready, we can preach the word of God to them. After planting the seed, the sower has to water it so that the seed can grow into a plant.

Now let's summarize the work of a farmer:

(1) First we till the soil, which means to soften the hearts of people by showing love to them and sharing testimonies.

This is the first step and the most difficult part, for only Yahweh God can change people's heart, whereas we can't do much. We commit the people to God and we keep on praying for them. Remember, when you pray for people, you are the first one to receive the blessing.

Let me tell you a testimony that I had heard from a missionary. He was born in a Christian family, and attended the church Sunday school since very young. But when he grew into a teenager, he became very arrogant. He saw that he knew the Bible better than the Sunday school teacher, and he looked down on him. He went to see the pastor and said to him that he was going to leave the church because he couldn't stand the Sunday school teacher anymore. The pastor smiled and asked him to do one thing before he leaves, and that is to pray for this Sunday school teacher every day for one year. If this teacher is so bad, he should help him, right? This young man accepted the request, and he started praying for that "bad" Sunday school teacher every day.

One year later he went to see the pastor again. By that time he was completely changed; he was no longer that arrogant young man, but had become a humble Christian. Because when he had been praying for that Sunday school teacher, he was drawing near to Yahweh God every day. His spiritual eyes were opened, he saw his own sins, he repented, and he was changed completely. At the end he did not leave the church but instead became a missionary who was sent out by the church to different places to preach the gospel.

I imitated this missionary. When people insulted me, I didn't fight back. I am not able to fight back anyway, being clumsy in speech. Instead I prayed for those who insulted me. In the end, I was the one benefited the most, for Yahweh God changed my heart, and He is pleased to use me to preach the gospel to people in far and wide places all over the world.

That is the first point, that we till the soil, which means to soften the hearts of people.

(2) The second point is that when people's hearts are ready, we plant the seed and water it, which means we share the word of God with them and help them to grow spiritually.

Life quality of a spiritual farmer

We see the work of a spiritual sower is difficult and heavy, it requires spiritual power and wisdom; then what kind of life quality does a spiritual farmer need to have?

1. Patience

^{NASB} **James 5:7 – 8** Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. ⁸ You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. (Jam 5:7-8 NASB)

Apostle James says we have to be patient. Please notice here that the word “patient” appears 3 times in just two verses, 7 and 8. When we try to soften the hearts of people so that we can preach the word to them, we have to be patient, we should never push too hard. I was very bad in growing plants because I was impatient; I kept on watering it, and in the end the water drowned the plant, and it died. Similarly when we preach the word to people, we have to be patient, we shouldn’t overwhelm the people, or they might get scared and run away. Anyway we always need to look to Yahweh God for guidance.

2. Co-working together and helping one another

^{NASB} **1 Corinthians 3:6 – 7** 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. (1Co 3:6-7 NASB)

Let’s look at this passage 1 Corinthians 3:6 – 7 again. Here Paul and Apollos were working together and helping one another. This is such a beautiful picture. And both realized they were nothing, for it was Yahweh God who made the plants grow.

3. We receive our reward according to our labor

^{NASB} **John 4:37 – 38** For in this *case* the saying is true, “One sows and another reaps.” ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor. (Joh 4:37 – 38 NASB)

Here the Lord Jesus teaches the disciples the concept of coworking together and reaping the fruit together. The fruit belongs to the kingdom of God, it doesn’t belong to the person who sows the seed. That’s why if one person sows the seed, it is alright for another to reap the fruit, because the fruit would go to the kingdom of God.

Then you might wonder whether that may encourage people to be lazy and irresponsible; some people may be irresponsible and do a lousy job! Don’t worry, Yahweh God sees everything, and He will reward us according to our work.

^{NASB} **1 Corinthians 3:8** Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. (1Co 3:8 NASB)

We set our eyes on the reward from Yahweh God, He will give reward to each one according to the labor we have put in!

^{NASB} **1 Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord. (1Co 15:58 NASB)

Here Apostle Paul encourages us to put in our best for the work that Yahweh God has assigned to us because our labor will not be in vain, and we will receive our reward!

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything. Today we have studied the title "Farmers" for Christians. We are the farmers of Yahweh God,

- We have to till the soil, that is to soften the hearts of people
- We have to sow the seed, that is to preach the word of God to people
- We have to take care of the plant, that is to help people grow up spiritually.

We co-work with our fellow farmers, we help one another to till the soil, to sow the seed, to water the plant, and to reap the fruit. One person sows the seed, maybe someone else will reap the fruit. The fruit belongs to the Kingdom of God. But in the future we will receive reward from Yahweh God according to the work we have put in.

The work of farmers is heavy, that's why even today Yahweh God is helping us and encouraging us; to me that is my reward at the present time. Do you seek the reward from the world or the reward from Yahweh God?

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