

Labor for God

John 4:1-42

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Introduction (John 4:31-42): the believer is to labor for God. His life is to be focused upon the will and work of God. His purpose for being on earth is to serve God, to obey and work for Him.

1. Physical vs. spiritual concerns (v.31-35).

2. Labor—for the harvest is ripe, the task is urgent (v.35).

3. Labor—for there are rewards and great benefits (v.36-38).

4. Labor—for results follow (v.39-42).

1. Concern, Physical vs. Spiritual— God, Work— Diligence— Faithfulness— Commitment (John 4:31-35): physical vs. spiritual concerns.

The disciples returned from town. They had gone to buy food ([John 4:8](#)). Earlier, when they had arrived at the well on the outskirts of the city, Jesus had been tired and hungry. But now, as the disciples sat eating, they noticed Jesus made no effort to eat. He had been famished and exhausted. They were concerned, so they suggested He eat.

Note two significant points.

1. The concern of the disciples was for physical nourishment. Their mind was not on the woman to whom Jesus had just witnessed, not on her spiritual needs. They had no spiritual depth yet.

Their minds were not...

- focused on Christ and His mission of salvation.
- concentrating upon a world lost in sin and shame.
- looking for every opportunity possible to reach and help people for God.

They had not yet learned the great warfare being waged between the physical and spiritual concerns of life. Their minds were on the physical: on food, on not missing a meal, on satisfying a temporary craving of the body.

2. The concern of Christ was for spiritual food and nourishment, to do the will and work of God.

Three points are seen in this verse.

a. The will that must concern men is *God's will*, and the work that must concern men is *God's work*, the will and work of...

- leading people to the Living Water ([John 4:10](#)).
- helping people quench their inner thirst ([John 4:14](#)).

- bringing people to God.
- seeking and saving the lost, even *Samaritans*: those who are looked upon with prejudice, thought to be of a lower caste, treated as the most despicable *outcasts* ([Luke 19:10](#)).

No greater will or work exists or can be done. *God alone* is God. His will and work is supreme.

- ⇒ Note the *esteem* with which Christ holds God: it is *God's will and work* that is to be done.
- ⇒ Note the *devotion* of Christ to God: God's will and work *must* be done.

b. God sent Christ. The words "sent me" are significant (see [John 3:34](#)). Christ was not sent to do the will of men, but of God. His work was not the work of men, but of God.

Thought 1. Note two lessons.

- 1) Note the warning to all believers. *Believers* are sent by God. They are to be single-minded. They are not to allow their *goals* and *energy* to become entangled with the business and affairs of the world.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" ([2 Tim. 2:4](#)).

- 2) Note the mission to all believers. Believers are *sent* by God. They are on earth primarily to do the will and work of God, even in their *secular* labor in the world.

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" ([John 20:21](#)).

"Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" ([Ephes. 4:28](#)).

c. Christ had to finish the will and work of God. God expected it to be completed. God expected obedience, faithfulness and perseverance until His will and work was done. Note: Christ did complete God's mission ([John 17:4](#); [John 19:30](#)). He now challenges His followers: **"Labor for God—finish your task—complete your purpose for being on earth."**

Thought 1. Note two warnings.

- 1) **Note the responsibility and duty of believers.** Believers are expected to finish the work that God sent them to do. Believers are not to become entangled and distracted by worldly affairs. They are to conquer wandering

thoughts and desires, cravings for food, complacency, sleepiness. They are not to be given over to the world and the flesh, indulgence and license, money and material possessions.

- 2) **Note the accountability of believers:** God *expects* believers to be faithful, so there has to be a day of accounting, a day when wages are paid out.

2. Vision— Evangelism (John 4:35): labor, for the harvest is ripe, the task is urgent.

Note three points.

1. The heart of Jesus was upon the harvest of souls. Men focus their hearts upon the world's harvest, the planting of seed and the reaping of grain, the investment of energy and money and the receiving of wages and gain. But the heart of Jesus was, and still is, upon people, upon the planting of the gospel seed and the reaping of souls for God.

2. The challenge of Jesus was, "**Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields.**" The challenge was to quit looking down upon the earth and upon the affairs of the world, but instead to *look up* and observe the fields of people streaming across the world. The scene was probably dramatic. The Samaritans in their long flowing white robes were probably streaming across the fields by the hundreds, if not the thousands. Jesus' heart and arms reached out in a burst of compassion and intense feeling; He cried, "**Look, lift up your eyes and look on the fields of lost souls streaming toward you. Let the things of earth grow strangely dim.**"

3. The fields of souls are white *already*: they are ready for harvesting *right now*. Since Christ has come to earth, God has put His Spirit into the world and supernaturally activated...

- a thirst for God.
- a sense of sin, a conviction of coming short.
- a deep loneliness and emptiness.
- a sense of purposelessness.
- the knowledge that Jesus Christ has come to earth claiming to be the Savior of the world, the very Son of God.

It is absolutely necessary that believers lift up their eyes and look *now*. If not, the ripe harvest of souls and bodies will...

- remain in the fields of the earth.
- ripen *beyond* being tasteful and useful (be too old, too far gone).
- rot and be lost forever.
- fall to the ground and decay.

Thought 1. Two significant points for the believer.

- 1) We must lift up our eyes in order to look. We cannot see ahead or around us if we do not lift up our eyes and look. The things of the earth have to grow *strangely dim before* we can look and see.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" ([Romans 12:2](#)).

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" ([1 Cor. 7:31](#)).

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" ([Galatians 6:14](#)).

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" ([1 John 2:15](#)).

- 2) We must look where we are so that our eyes will see the reality of what is around us. It is the harvest of souls around us that we are to look upon and focus our attention upon.

Note: we can look upon foreign fields through the challenge of others.
Note another fact: the world is becoming more and more *one neighborhood*. Distance is becoming more and more insignificant. Every believer is becoming more and more responsible for the individual in the foreign land. In fact, a man's country is foreign to everyone else in the world, no matter who he is.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" ([Galatians 6:8-9](#)).

"But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" ([Mark 4:29](#)).

"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" ([Luke 10:2](#)).

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" ([Matthew 4:19](#)).

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit [souls]

should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" ([John 15:16](#)).

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" ([Romans 9:3](#)).

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel [any nation] is, that they might be saved" ([Romans 10:1](#)).

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law....To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" ([1 Cor. 9:19-20, 22](#)).

"Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" ([James 5:20](#)).

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" ([Jude 23](#)).

"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" ([Psalm 126:5-6](#)).

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" ([Hosea 10:12](#)).

3. Rewards (John 4:36-38): labor, for there are rewards and great benefits.

Christ mentioned six particular rewards and benefits.

- 1. The laborer will receive wages.** God is going to pay the believer and pay him well. Note that the wages are already there, ready to be paid (**see note, Rewards—' [Luke 16:10-12](#) at end of this study on notes page 7-8.**)

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" ([Matthew 19:29](#)).

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" ([Matthew 25:23](#)).

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" ([Daniel 12:3](#)).

2. The laborer gathers fruit unto *life eternal*. What he does is of supreme value. It is the greatest work imaginable. His work is lasting; it endures forever. His work actually delivers people from *ever* perishing, and it causes God to give them abundant and eternal life.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)).

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" ([John 3:36](#)).

3. The laborer experiences the overflowing joy of serving God with other laborers. **Note:** there is no envy or conflict between the two laborers. Both laborers work and rejoice together. (How different from so many!)

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" ([Luke 15:6-7](#)).

"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? For ye are our glory and joy" ([1 Thes. 2:19-20](#)).

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" ([Psalm 126:6](#)).

4. The laborer is given the privilege of having a *specific part* in God's great work. It may be sowing; it may be reaping. It does not matter. It is God's work, and it is a *privilege for any man to have a part in it*.

Note something else. Each man has only a part. No man does it all. One man sows, and another man reaps. The task is too great for one man. All men are needed.

- ⇒ If the sower fails to sow, the reaper cannot reap. Some soul is not fed enough to ripen for the picking.
- ⇒ If the reaper does not reap, the soul ripened by the sower passes its usefulness: it rots and falls to the ground and decays.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" ([1 Cor. 3:6-8](#)).

5. The laborer has the privilege of being chosen and sent by Christ, the Son of God Himself.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" ([John 15:16](#)).

6. The laborer is given the privilege of serving with other great servants. Other great believers are laboring, and each servant enters into the labors of all others. (What a challenge to pray for all of God's servants and to get to the task of either sowing or reaping, whichever God has called us to do!)

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" ([1 Cor. 3:9-11](#)).

[4. \(John 4:39-42\) Witnessing, Results— Ministry: labor, for results do follow.](#)

What follows gives a picture of exactly what Christ had been saying about laboring for God.

- 1.** Many **"believed on Christ"** because of the woman's testimony. The seed had been sown in the woman's heart by the prophets of old and through the first five books of Scripture ([John 4:12, 19-20](#)). Jesus reaped her soul. She in turn went and bore her testimony within the city. And "many...of that city believed on Him for the saying [testimony] of the woman."
- 2.** Other opportunities were given. The new believers begged Christ to stay with them. They wanted to learn more, and they had friends who needed to hear Him as well.

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" ([2 Cor. 4:13](#)).

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" ([Malachi 3:16](#)).

NOTES ON REWARDS

[\(Luke 16:10-12\)](#) **Rewards:** the Christian is to be faithful in handling possessions, for his faithfulness determines what he will be trusted with eternally.

1. Money and possessions are the least trust given a person ([Luke 16:10](#)).

They are nothing compared to eternal salvation and to love, joy, peace, and the absolute assurance and confidence of life eternal. They are nothing compared to the presence and companionship, the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit. They are nothing compared to possessing the Word of God and the promises of God. They are nothing compared to knowing God personally and to being made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.

2. Unfaithfulness in the use of money and possessions disqualifies a person from true, heavenly riches.

A person may think his life and possessions are his own to do with as he wills, but they are not. His life and possessions are God's. God has trusted the person with life and possessions only as long as he is on this earth. The holder is only a steward of all he is and has. He cannot take his life or possessions with him out of this world when he dies. He has both life and possessions only temporarily—as a trust. If he handles his life and possessions badly, he shows he is not fit to be trusted with responsibility in the new heaven and earth.

Scripture says that the *true heavenly riches* and rewards are beyond comprehension:

Rewards Dealing with our Nature or State of Being

- ⇒ Being adopted as a son of God ([Galatians 4:4-7](#); [1 John 3:1](#)).
- ⇒ Being made blameless and harmless ([Phil. 2:15](#)).
- ⇒ Being given eternal life ([John 3:16](#); [1 Tim. 6:19](#)).
- ⇒ Being given an enduring substance ([Hebrews 10:34](#)).
- ⇒ Being given a glorious body ([Phil. 3:11, 21](#); [1 Cor. 15:42-44](#)).

- ⇒ Being given eternal glory and honor and peace ([Romans 2:10](#)).
- ⇒ Being given eternal rest and peace ([Hebrews 4:9](#); [Rev. 14:13](#)).
- ⇒ Being given the blessings of the Lord ([Proverbs 10:22](#)).
- ⇒ Being given the knowledge of Christ Jesus ([Phil. 3:8](#)).
- ⇒ Being given durable riches and righteousness ([Proverbs 8:18](#)).
- ⇒ Being made priests ([Rev. 20:6](#)).
- ⇒ Being given a crown of incorruption ([1 Cor. 9:25](#)).
- ⇒ Being given a crown of righteousness ([2 Tim. 4:8](#)).
- ⇒ Being given a crown of life ([James 1:12](#)).
- ⇒ Being given a crown of glory ([1 Peter 5:4](#)).

Rewards Dealing with Work or Position or Rule

- ⇒ Being made exalted beings ([Rev. 7:9-12](#)).
- ⇒ Being made ruler over many things ([Matthew 25:23](#)).
- ⇒ Being given the Kingdom of God ([James 2:5](#); [Matthew 25:34](#)).
- ⇒ Being given a position or rule and authority ([Luke 12:42-44](#); [Luke 22:28-29](#); [1 Cor. 6:2-3](#)).
- ⇒ Being given eternal responsibility and joy ([Matthew 25:21, 23](#)).
- ⇒ Being given rule and authority over cities ([Luke 19:17, 19](#)).
- ⇒ Being given thrones and the privilege of reigning forever ([Rev. 20:4](#); [Rev. 22:5](#)).
- ⇒ Being given the privilege of surrounding the throne of God ([Rev. 7:9-13](#); [Rev. 20:4](#)).
- ⇒ Being made priests ([Rev. 20:6](#)).
- ⇒ Being made kings ([Rev. 1:5](#); [Rev. 5:10](#)).

Rewards Dealing with our Inheritance or Wealth

- ⇒ Being made an heir of God ([Romans 8:16-17](#); [Titus 3:7](#)).
- ⇒ Being given an incorruptible inheritance ([1 Peter 1:3-4](#)).
- ⇒ Being given the blessings of the Lord ([Proverbs 10:22](#)).
- ⇒ Being given durable riches and righteousness ([Proverbs 8:18](#)).
- ⇒ Being given unsearchable riches ([Ephes. 3:8](#)).
- ⇒ Being given treasures in heaven ([Matthew 19:21](#); [Luke 12:33](#)).

3. Unfaithfulness disqualifies a person from all he would receive.

The other man in [verse 12](#) refers to God. Our lives and possessions are His. If we are not faithful in using them, how can we expect to be compensated? Note a person never has all he would have if he fails to pursue God and to give others what is due them. ([Matthew 19:29](#); [Mark 10:29-30](#); [Luke 18:30](#).)

"Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" ([Matthew 25:27-29](#)).

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" ([Mark 8:36](#)).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" ([1 Cor. 3:13-15](#)).

"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you" ([Jeremiah 5:25](#)).