

LIKE THE FARMER

“The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.” —2 TIMOTHY 2:6

Farming is about perseverance, patience and daylong toil. The farmer ploughs his field, fertilizes the soil, plants the seed, and if nature doesn't do it for him, he waters the seed. If he came back the next day there would be nothing profitable to show for his work. If he came back in a week, there would still be nothing. Come back in a month and perhaps green shoots are breaking the surface, but come back in six months, and he has his harvest.

Like the farmer, being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves perseverance and patience. Realistically, we know much of the Christian life is not glamorous. It involves hard work and often with obstacles that hinder our progress. But in them, we live in dependence upon God, and sow to the Spirit; that is, we submit it all to God and trust Him.

Timothy, a young man mentored by Paul and left to head the church in Ephesus, had run into several obstacles. He was inexperienced, often sick, frowned upon by the elders of the church and easily intimidated. To encourage him, Paul writes from a Roman prison and tells him, “The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.” But those crops take a while in coming. While the farmer is waiting, the implanting of the seed begins to produce its fruit. The wonderful thing about planting the Word of God into people's hearts is that, like the farmer, we are planting a seed that is alive.

The life is in the seed, and if the seed is the undiluted Word of God, free from artificial additives, and planted in good soil, which are the hearts of people God is preparing, then there will be a harvest.... even in Ephesus. Ephesus was a predominately pagan city with many resistant to the gospel. In Galatians 6:9, Paul says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” “Timothy, you are in a place that is hostile to the gospel, but do not grow weary. Keep doing good because you will produce a harvest if you do not give up.”

Paul also tells Timothy, “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead...” (2 Timothy 2:8). What Paul is saying is to trust and depend on the eternal power and presence of the life of Christ within him. In combining that with the external disciplines of perseverance and patience, we not only experience the deep satisfaction of being secure in Christ, but in producing a harvest for Him.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I can't imagine a more worthy cause than producing a harvest for You. Grant me the patience and perseverance to make that a reality in my life. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I discouraged in my witness for Christ, because I don't see immediate results?