

Laborers With God (1 Cor. iii: 9)

by Seth Rees

We are called to be co-workers with God, and to follow His lead in our lives and in our work, recognizing His work and distinguishing it from human efforts.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 3:9, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Evangelism", "Partnership With God"

Description

Seth Rees preaches about the incredible partnership we have with God, where He takes us, flawed as we are, into His corporation. God cancels our debts, provides unlimited resources, and equips us with divine qualifications for the work. He calls us to evangelize the neglected masses and work where He is actively moving, outside the traditional boundaries. Rees emphasizes the urgency of rescuing the perishing, challenging listeners to align with God's work among the broken and lost, rather than conforming to stagnant religious practices.

Transcript

For we are laborers together with God." 1 Cor. 8: 9.

This is the announcement of the greatest partnership known in the history of time. It almost staggers our hearts as well as thrills our hearts when we remember that there is a partnership, and that the God of the universe has taken us into the corporation -- the worms of clay that we are. There is no explanation; it is beyond all human comprehension. The statement is brief, but it is a fact. In fact we may greatly rejoice.

There sat at one table in Exeter Hall, London, two thousand partners to partake of an annual dinner. They were members of an English publishing firm. They had adopted the plan of making all the employees partners in the business, and when they came together at their annual dinner it was a great sight. They represented a great firm, and it strikingly suggests to me a great time coming when not merely two thousand but that number represented by the one hundred and forty-four thousand, whatever that number may be, shall sit down to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. At that time, every partner in this great firm shall be recognized and shall have a seat at the table. That will be a great supper; a great day. When we remember that we are called with such an exalted calling, it gives us a very keen sense of our utter nothingness, and we never could feel like rising up to embrace our privileges but for the grace of God. In this holy partnership we are one; members of the same body. One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren.

In every partnership there must be two parties; there must be two sides. In this there is a Divine and a human. What a mercy that God should ever have looked upon us and agreed to take us into partnership with Him! On each side there are conditions that must be met. There are certain things that transpire.

I glance first at the Divine side, and find that God takes us in when we are not only insolvent but we are in rebellion. He assumes all our liabilities; He cancels the debt that stands against us, and establishes our credit at the bank of Heaven, just as if we had never squandered a cent. No difference what the catalogue of crime, no difference what the pollution or stain may be, the God of the universe takes us in and wipes it all out and gives us a commercial standing, a credit at the bank of Heaven, so that we are treated as though we had always belonged to the firm. We ought to worship God this morning. Just to think that He would take us up under such circumstances!

I heard of a noble business gentleman who had an employee who embezzled several sums of money from him but was finally brought to true repentance, and after a long struggle went to his employer, not only to confess but to suffer the penalty of the law, and in great humility he made his confession and closed by saying, "Of course I shall not expect you to keep me in your employment." After a pause the answer was, "No sir, I shall not keep you in my employment, but I will make you my partner for I know the value of such a testimony, and the repentance that would bring such a confession." Not many men would act so nobly, but God always does.

When we confess our sin, He not only forgives us but He takes us into the greatest partnership of all the universe, and we sit at His elbow and are co-workers together with God.

Next thing, I notice on the Divine side, is that He furnishes all the capital stock for the transaction of just as much business as we are willing to do. It is not so always in earthly corporations. You take up the announcement of earthly corporations, and you often find the word "limited." When we asked the state of Rhode Island to incorporate us as Portsmouth Campmeeting Association, they limited our capital stock, and put the word "limited" on our papers, but God never does that. You can find such articles as this in the corporation papers: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work." So that the capital stock with which we do business is bounded only by our faith, there is no other limit. Brother, you can be a penny host or be a millionaire. You can go to sea in a ship and transact business in great waters, and behold wonders in the deep. God has placed within our grasp such possibilities and such exhaustless resources. All we have to do is to believe God and our resources are without limit. Glory to God forever!

Not only does God take us in and furnish everything but He gives us the Divine qualification for this work. He takes the hardest knot He can find for the finest polish. He takes the weakest things in the market with which to accomplish His greatest purposes. He gives us the Divine qualification so that it is no more a question of our natural abilities, it is not a question of appointments or of acquirements; it is a question of preparation, of the hand of God upon us. We prepare men by schools, by rhetoric, by philosophy, parchments; we turn out men supposedly to God's work. They often make a most disgraceful failure, but God turns His hand upon a servant, and though His hand may seem heavy He never lets him up until he can come in victory, and run through a troop or jump over a wall, and successfully accomplish that to which he is sent.

God could have called the angels; they would have been glad to go. They do everything as a glad service; they fairly fly at His beck and call. All they want to know is that there is a chance to serve, and they are off,

but God calls us unto this glorious partnership of carrying out the great commission, that of evangelizing the world. There is a human side, it is true, but there is not much of it. The most there is to it is to submit, to say "Yes" to God. The most there is, is to keep out of the way, and acquiesce in all that He does. We are called to the highest calling on record, and yet how slow people are to respond to it. It is a great wonder to me that He would call us at all, and a greater wonder, since He does, that we do not always respond. How can we hesitate? How can we procrastinate and move so slowly in responding to such a call? Thank God, many of us are learning to come quickly and run with alacrity on the errands of the Lord. All we want to know is His will and purpose for us, and we gladly take our position in the ranks of this glorious army. Thank God for the privilege of being a co-worker together with Him! There is such power in our united action. The smallest animals can build a coral island because there are so many of them. If we are one with each other and one with Him there is nothing that is impossible, and no weapon formed against us shall prosper, and every tongue that is lifted against us shall be paralyzed, and we shall know the conquerors tread from victory to victory, from strength to strength, and from glory to glory, until in eternal glory we have sat down together, the one hundred and forty-four thousand in spotless white, to celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

We need this morning, not only united action on our part, but we need to cheer and help each other, recognizing that He is the sole proprietor and that we are His helpers. It goes very easy if we are helping Him. With this recognition we are so united, so yoked together that we will pull once, twice, always together. There is nothing that can stand in our way. There come times in our work when things seem difficult. There come epochal periods when something tremendous must be done and it looks as if everything had been done that could be, but thank God, if we are one, victory is sure. If we are co-workers together with God we must recognize His work and distinguish between it and the works of man. If I am to work with Him I must find out where He is at work. I announce to you this morning that the blessed Holy Ghost who is preeminently active in the salvation of men in this last and Christian age has changed his center of operation, and He has moved into another territory. He has left certain fields, they are deserted, they are empty, there is nothing done in them. If you tarry in those deserted districts you can not be a co-worker with God. The time was when He worked there. He has done His best in the great ecclesiastical bodies as they exist, or have existed in the past, but He is now in other fields.

When a young man or a young lady gets filled with the Holy Ghost, he or she usually makes for the slums or the Bible School, in preparation for missionary work. They lose their relish for societies and organizations of the ecclesiastical bodies; they can no longer join in the socials, entertainments, fairs and bazaars, so common in American Protestantism. God has a great center of operation from which center He is radiating, and streams of salvation are flowing in every direction. He no longer centers with the board of bishops, ecclesiastical convocations, or great institutions of learning. You will find Him now outside the camp, outside the gates, beyond the city limits, you will find Him in the hedges among the robbers and drunkards and friendless; and in the lanes with the harlots, the hopeless and homeless. He is at work on the frontier and back among the mountains and in the foreign fields; in humble little missions, under brush arbors and in tents, but the supposed centers, of supposed religious power, are destitute of the Holy Ghost and Holy Ghost revivals. That is why we say it is wasting time and squandering money and throwing away our energies to stay and try to work where God is not. You say, "Why doesn't He work there?" Well, it is not my purpose to answer all your questions. There are reasons. One is, that the Holy Ghost does not stay where He is not wanted. He does not stay where He is insulted. He can not stay where He is not archbishop. He must hold the control and power; the reins must be left loosely in His hands. He will not work in human harness; He will not follow human plans; He does not submit to man

made rules and regulations; though made by the learned doctors. He will leave town before He will submit to such conditions. He will take a thug or a tramp or a bum, a man who has looked for work for twenty years and hoped he would never find it, and save and sanctify him and heal his body, and start a nucleus around which the powers of Heaven will gather, and sing and shout until there is a great revival.

Don't you believe, brother, that you are a co-worker with God if, you are thundering around on an empty battle field and there is nothing going on. I would rather sit up with a corpse that has been dead four days than to stay with many of the so-called churches of our land. God has called us to keep step with Him. We must ascertain where He plants His battery, where there is a real engagement and go forth with Him to battle. If you want to fire blank cartridges and fool around with a popgun, and celebrate with fire crackers and hurt nobody and bring nothing to pass, you can do so, but you are certain to lose your reward. I am seeking to know what God will put His seal on. I can not afford to sanction what He does not endorse. Not even for the sake of schools, centers of learning, titles, or anything that the religious world may applaud or eulogize, not for a single moment can I afford to lag behind when I see that the pillar of fire has made advance. What we enjoy today has cost us too much, it is too sweet to our souls to change off now for a mere, empty, powerless form of religion. It is no time for you to tie yourself up to a dead ecclesiasticism which will mar your progress in Divine things. There is no hope of a resurrection of these dead bodies. This is why my heart is in the slums and in the jungles; this is why I have hope for the people who are down, and my whole soul and being is being poured out to help them. We have approached the highway and hedge dispensation; we are right down in the Saturday evening of the world's history. We must go outside of our little Jerusalem and find the lepers lying in the hedges and lanes outside the gate. Show me a movement today of any sort that really has the Divine impress and the Divine stamp upon it, which is not giving especial attention to evangelizing the neglected masses. Where is such a movement? Not one can be found. Everything with the Divine stamp upon it, everyone who bears the image of the Master is going forth to seek the low, lost and neglected.

This is why we have a missionary day in this Camp meeting. This is why we are sending missionaries abroad, why we establish Rescue homes; this is why we have city missionaries who are willing to leave good salaries, deny themselves, suffer all sorts of exposure to pull people out of the fire, to save and get them ready for that great day when we are going to sit down together. Here you are, some of you, members of the great popular Churches, pouring your money out to support them and the masses of the unsaved are not sought for, they are not helped, they are not wanted. The Church would pull her skirts about herself and spurn the thought of their coming into her best pews. You may fight against the organization of independent Holiness Churches if you like, but we are going to encourage it. We are organizing Churches that are willing to take in drunkards, harlots and tramps.

A thousand million heathen go into Christless graves every generation. Three hundred and fifty thousand fallen girls in this country without friends, without sympathy, without hope, and the churches running up their steeples, changing their pipe organs for something better, exchanging their pews for something more expensive, renting them for such prices that no common people can attend, and the girls and boys who are down and are going down in platoons have no chance. Many of them have never had a good chance; you have had a thousand. Would it not be consistent for you to give them a second chance. Many of them are in sin from force of circumstances; they are helpless, hopeless and homeless, and there is not one Protestant Church in ten that is willing to take them in and give them recognition. There is no place where God so loves to work as among them. Am I going with God or am I going with the folks? Preachers and people singing and talking about rescuing the perishing and at the same time putting emphasis upon

fundamental error, often expressed, frequently quoted, "A bird with a broken wing can never soar so high again," suggesting that if a woman is once down she can never rise again. It is as false as hell. It is as black as the back walls of damnation. It had its origin in the infernal pit among the damned creatures who are staggering their way through eternal night. We have a Gospel that can heal a broken wing, that can heal a broken limb, a broken heart, and a broken home and can renew and transform the most wrecked and ruined life that Satan ever spent his venom upon. We have a Gospel that will make a bird fly higher after its wing has been broken than before. A Gospel that will restore the year that the caterpillar and canker worm hath eaten. A salvation that not only takes the sin away, but, thank God, it will cover the scars. It can take the lines of sin out of a woman's countenance. We have a Gospel, Sir, that has been misrepresented and consequently misunderstood. The cause is traceable to the fact that American Protestantism is backslidden from God.

You say that is too sweeping. My soul is stirred. I have been spending my Sundays when at home in the Harrison police station in Chicago where the Norway rat drinks out of the same pail of water and eats off of the same loaf of bread with the prisoner, and where the vermin are seen crawling on every hand; where I find eight men packed in one little cell about eight by ten feet, with no chance for more than two to lie down even by telescoping, and the other six must stand up all night or take their turn lying in the filth. I go through the different wards and as I see the state of affairs, the condition of the submerged classes, I say to you that when Stead was in this country from London, on his tour of investigation, and received such criticism by the American press for what he published, he never exaggerated so far as I can learn, and yet your preacher that you are paying gets up and reads a little rose colored sermon about the world getting better. I say to you with measured tread, we are in an age when if a man is going to keep step with God he cannot remain in any sort of bondage, to any sort of ecclesiastical powers, but he must go with God, and rescue men and women as God has appointed him. I am not speaking particularly about Church membership. I have not time to deal with a thing so small, I am dealing with great principles and things that seem too large for my soul to set forth. If the people of God would unite in this work we might evangelize this world and bring about the coming of Jesus in a single decade, yet I am facing hundreds of people here this morning who will never accomplish much unless you discover where God is at work and where He wants you to invest your money. The Lord help us to lie on our faces and weep and fast and pray until we are sure of Divine guidance and of Divine success.

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