



“Where Are The Laborers?”
“A Sermon From The Book Of Matthew”

“Effective Expositions For Life”

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Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38

Introduction

Today we live in a world of seven billion people. Almost two billion of these are professing Muslims, while thousands upon thousands are in the bondage of other false religions and cultic activity. Presently, we are told that almost two billion people have never heard the simple plan of salvation so that they might have the opportunity to receive Christ as their personal Savior. Therefore, we must conclude that God's genuinely saved people have not and are not doing the work of world evangelism like Jesus challenged the early disciples and all believers succeeding the first disciples to do. We live in a world that the primary feeling of most people is that they are the individuals that need the most attention, and therefore, this self-centered selfish attitude has kept even those who say they are saved from truly sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the masses of people who are going to die and spend eternity in the fires of hell. All of the human rationality and disbelief by those who say they are atheist doesn't change the fact one iota that when people die without Jesus, they will go to hell.

This lesson today is about our Lord Jesus who was making His third tour through Galilee where He was not only healing scores of sick people, but He was also going in and out of the synagogues teaching and preaching not only the Old Testament Law and Prophets, but also proclaiming the New Testament covenant message of the love of Himself for the lost world and the mandatory responsibility for every sinner to get saved and follow Christ. We are told by some historians that at this time of Jesus' earthly ministry, there may have been as many as 200 cities, towns and villages in the Galilee area. And it is believed that the population may have been as much as three million people. Thus, everywhere Jesus went, He was constantly bombarded with the needs of scores of people. Numbers were sick physically, but the greatest sickness that the people had was the spiritual sickness of being lost like sheep that had strayed from the flock, and they needed urgently to be found before it was too late.

Up until this time in the life and ministry of Jesus, it would seem that He alone was doing the teaching and preaching, plus the healing of the sick. But, we should understand that in the very next chapter of Matthew, Jesus began to commission His disciples for the work ahead of them because it was now time for them to get involved in the mission ministry to which God had called them. So, what we see Jesus doing at this time was indeed preparation for the soon-coming ministry of His disciples. In other words, Jesus had shown them for many months what He had come to do, and He had been training them for their task which was just ahead. And may I say that the task He was training His disciples to do is the same one He has given to us. Therefore, let us take a look at the Scripture text for this study and see the challenge that God is giving to us from His Word.

I. NOTICE THE PROOF OF THE MESSAGE. v. 35

In verse 35 of our text, God gives us some tremendous thoughts about the message that Jesus was delivering to the people all over Galilee. You might say that in this one verse, He give us valid proof that His message was different than any message that had ever been delivered to the people of Galilee or any other place in Israel. It was the message of salvation and deliverance for all those who would believe in Him and receive Him as their personal Lord and Savior. Still today, this is the message that the entire world needs. And what a thrill it is to be a part of God's program of world evangelism and missions. Let's take a look at this proof of the message which Jesus proclaimed.

A. The proof was in the credibility of the Messenger. v. 35a

Who was this new preacher that had come to Galilee with this new message which the world needed? Well, this new preacher was none other than Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, Who was born of the virgin Mary down in Bethlehem, and was now living in His earthly father's home in Nazareth. His home was a modest one and one where no doubt He learned the carpenter's trade from His earthly father, Joseph. This was Jesus Who had given up all of the royalty and regality of heaven and divested Himself of much of His position and power to take on the form of a human being so that He could ultimately die on the cross. Therefore, there never had been a teacher like this One and there never will be again. But, we can rejoice because we will have no trouble believing that He is Who He claimed to be if we give our lives to Him and experience the new birth. All the proof in the world that we need to know that His message is authentic is just simply to give our lives totally and completely to Him. Once a person does this, he or she will become a new creature in Christ and his or her life will never be the same again.

B. The proof was in the content of the message. v. 35b

The content of the message which Jesus was teaching and preaching was simply the Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom of God. It was the glorious message that there was and is hope in what is seemingly a hopeless world. And, even in that New Testament time when Rome controlled the known world, the message of the Gospel brought the promise that one day things would be better, not only for the Israelites, but especially for everyone who gave their lives to Christ in a personal experience with Jesus. The people of Jesus' day may have been looking for a new kingdom which would provide a deliverer to free the people from Rome's bondage, but the message they received from Jesus was far greater because it was a message about living in a spiritual Kingdom rightly related to the King. And, it was also a message of hope that one day there would ultimately be a literal earthly Kingdom for the Jewish nation, but presently they could have an eternal relationship with Christ Himself and live above the bondage of Rome and of sin. The message was one of hope, forgiveness, and a promise for better things to come.

C. The proof was in the confirmation of the miracles. v. 35c

It is very hard for some people to understand it in this dispensation of history, but we must understand that during the time of the first century church there was a transitional period of time when the new Gospel message had to have signs and miracles to affirm the truthfulness and credibility of the message. These miracles and signs were very prominent in the ministry of Jesus, and then again after the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached his dynamic message.

These miracles and signs were necessary because the Bible text of the New Testament was not yet completed. Of course, after the completion of the written text at the end of the first century, there was no longer the necessity of these confirming signs and miracles to validate the Gospel message preached by Jesus and afterward His disciples. Yet, I do believe that God still heals people physically in these days, but not to confirm the authenticity of the Word of God or the Gospel message. I would be very wrong to say that He does not continue to heal people because He healed an incurable lung disease for me back in 2013. But my friends, we must understand that the originally transitional signs were not given to the entire church to continue for the same purpose they were demonstrated in New Testament days. But one thing for sure, when Jesus and the disciples, including Paul the Apostle, healed people during their ministries, both Jews and Gentiles were given proof that the new message they were hearing was indeed truth.

Before moving on to the next point, I want to mention that now since the written Word of God is completely finished, there is no need for any kind of miracle to affirm or confirm that the Bible is truth when scores of people are being changed completely spiritually by the power of God's Word. In fact, the greatest healing miracle that has ever been known is when Jesus Christ saves a lost soul and changes the entire life of the individual who places his or her faith in the finished product of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, all we need to do is to believe in the authenticity of God's Word and the Gospel message in order to exercise saving faith in what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross and arose from the dead. There is no greater miracle ever to be seen more than when a lost sinner is transformed by the power of God's Word (II Corinthians 5:17).

II. NOTICE THE PITY OF THE MASTER. v. 36

I want to begin this point by providing this entire verse, **Matthew 9:36**, where we find these words: **"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."** Folks, this has to be one of the most moving passage of Scriptures in the entire Word of God. I say this because of the unbelievable compassion that is shown by our Savior toward those wandering lost people that were like sheep without anyone to shepherd them. Remember that Jesus has been in Galilee teaching and preaching the Kingdom of God while confirming the veracity of His message by many miracles of healing and deliverance. Obviously, there was a huge multitude that showed up to witness what Jesus was saying and doing, and so

our Lord's heart was literally broken over the lostness of these people. The people were just hopeless living in their own world with no hope whatsoever. But may I say that when Jesus comes on the scene, there will always be hope for everyone who will put their faith and trust in Him. And I must tell you that when no one else will care, Jesus will. Therefore, we must have on our hearts what He has on His, and when this happens we will do everything we can to reach out to those who are wandering in their lostness with no one to care for them. Let's take a look at three important points concerning the pity and compassion that Jesus extended to the multitudes during the days of His earthly ministry, and He is still doing the same today.

A. Notice that this pity was created by the Master's Cogitation. v. 36a

Now if this sounds like a big word, I guess you could say it is. However, it is truly a great word because it means that as Jesus was viewing the multitudes, he was sizing up the situation to determine what needed to be done to solve this enormous problem of humanity that needed so much help. In other words, Jesus was evaluating the seriousness of the need and the urgency of the hour. And even in His assessment of the situation, I can see His broken heart which really went out to these lost people who were fainting along the way with no hope whatsoever. So, Jesus' evaluation of the problem produced a vision of what could be done.

Therefore, we too must take a look around us and see the multitudes that are perishing without Christ as their Shepherd, and we must recognize that the Gospel message is the only hope that they have. And, if they are to receive the Gospel, then we must take the message to them. But, we need to know that this will never happen until we too have genuine pity in our hearts for these lost dying people who still need to hear about Jesus. Without laborers to take them the Good News, there will be no hope. And if they get the Good News too late, it will no longer be good news.

And, I must remind all of us that we can never have genuine compassion for those who are lost unless we have intimacy with Christ daily. In order for us to really love sinners the way we should, then Jesus must love them through us. And therefore, He can't love through us unless we allow Him to be Lord and Master in our lives.

B. Notice that this pity was continued by the Master's Compassion. v. 36b

We now come to the main point that produced this great text in the Word of God. That point is that Jesus had enormous compassion toward the multitude who did not yet know Him. Truthfully, when the Bible says that Jesus was moved with compassion, it means that He was "moved in His bowels" with so much emotion that He may have even been sick on His stomach to the point that He vomited or He may have even had diarrhea. If this sounds very gross to you, just try to remember a time in your life when you received some bad news and you were so overwhelmed by the news that you were made sick on your stomach. This has happened to me several times down through the years, and therefore I can readily understand how Jesus

must have felt because He came to seek and save those who were lost. Thus, when He saw the multitudes that needed to be saved, His heart was broken and His pity went out to these dear people. Also, bear in mind that up until this time, Jesus was doing most of all of the ministry while being with His disciples, but the time had now come when these disciples were going to be commissioned to get busy fulfilling the Great Commission to the lost world. In other words, the mission was changing because soon Jesus would die on the cross, rise from the dead, and return to heaven. Then, the work would have to go on through those laborers whom He had sent to take the Gospel to the lost world. In fact, in the next chapter, **Matthew 10**, Jesus did indeed commission the apostles and sent them forth to the mission fields. I am presently writing a book on chapter ten dealing with "God's Biblical Blueprint For Missions." So my dear friends, we will never reach the multitudes with the Gospel until we have genuine pity and compassion coming from our hearts because of our intimacy with Christ. Again I must say, "We have to have on our hearts what Jesus has on His; the souls of men, women, boys and girls."

C. The pity was compounded by the Master's Calculation. v. 36c

In the first part of this verse, Jesus saw the multitudes and evaluated the situation as very bad. But now, in the last part of the verse, He calculates that the situation is indeed extremely bad because of the fainting of the people and the danger that is present for those wandering sheep. You might say that Jesus' thought pattern had moved from observation to complete calculation so much that He is now pondering what must be done. Of course, we know that Jesus knew that He had come to die on the cross and rise from the dead to rescue the perishing, but now He came to acknowledge or confess that because He would be going away to heaven, He would for sure need more laborers to help Him in this worldwide task. Therefore, I believe He was trying to impress upon the hearts and minds of His disciples to see the lost sheep as He saw them, or they would never be moved with compassion to help reach these lost people. So friends, we need to know that not only can evangelism and world missions be taught, they must also be caught from those who have a contagious spirit for winning people to Christ. I assure you that you will never become a laborer for Jesus unless you get on fire and become passionate about telling the world about Him. It is sad to say though that in most of our churches around the world, especially here in America, the fire for evangelism has gone out and church function has become nothing more than dead routine and formalism. May God deliver us from these country-club style religious recreation centers, and get us back to the task of world missions.

III. NOTICE THE PROCLAMATION TO THE MISSIONARIES. v. 37

Before Jesus could send out His disciples as new missionaries, he had to proclaim a personal message to them so that they could receive His command and catch His burden before they started on their way to share the Gospel message. You might say that we are not prepared to preach to others until we have had a receptive

heart and a teachable spirit to claim the message and responsibility that God has given to everyone of His saved brothers or sisters. Therefore, my prayer is that God will open our ears and our hearts to the message He is trying to get across to us in order to prepare us for the task of world evangelism which all of us should be doing. Let's now take a look at three points pertaining to the proclamation which Jesus gave to His disciples.

A. Our Lord's Proclamation Was Personal. v. 37a

In the first part of this verse, we are told that Jesus speaks personally to his disciples about the great harvest that is waiting for reapers. I don't mean to be melodramatic, but I would just like to say that when God speaks to any or all of us, He always does it in a personal way. This is true when He draws us to salvation and it is also true when He calls us to a place of service in His Kingdom work. The call of God is very personal and no one will know for sure what God wants him or her to do with their lives in the work of the Kingdom unless he or she pays close attention to the voice of God speaking through His Word and even through open doors. May God please help us to listen carefully to what He is saying to us when the fields are now ripe unto harvest and the laborers are so few.

B. Our Lord's Proclamation Was Promising. v. 37b

I genuinely love the part of this verse which says, "**The harvest truly is plenteous,....**" What a tremendous promise our Lord gave to His first disciples, and He is still giving to us today this same promise. The promise is that the harvest is truly plenteous if we will pay the price to reap in the fields regularly and consistently. Folks, this means that harvesting the crop of souls that are ready to be saved should be our main concern. If it is our main concern, then our lives will be prioritized so that we will be busy sharing the Gospel personally, participating in missions collectively with our church and mission teams, and we will be down sizing our lives so that we can invest in this harvest field evangelism. Of course, "I know that there are those today who teach that we should not fish where the fish are biting, or reap where the crops are ripe, or try to win people to Christ through mass evangelism." Their concept of the Great Commission is that we must go through under-ground methods and slip up on the blind side of non-expectant people groups and maybe share the Gospel with a few of these people, and then be sure and disciple each one of the new converts before we move on to try and win more to Christ. If this sounds like I am sarcastic, you are absolutely right! This new style of mission strategy is strait out of the pits of hell. Why folks, the former President of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention told me in a letter indirectly sent to me that "the purpose of the Great Commission is not to populate heaven with as many souls as possible, but instead, the purposes is to take the Gospel to every unreached people group and then let them win their own people to Christ." This really sounds good until you stop and think about that statement that the purpose of the Great Commission is not to populate heaven with as many

souls as possible. May I say emphatically, “Hogwash”. If the purpose of the Great Commission is not to win souls and prepare them for heaven, then folks let’s shut her down, close the churches and take a long vacation. This new-fangled “Emergent Church” trash doctrine is so far from Biblical truth that we should avoid it at all cost. Poor Jesus! He didn’t know that He needed to send His disciples to the fields where the doors were closed to the Gospel, and then, as Zane Pratt said in his book on “The Introduction To Global Missions”, “God gave us the authority to go into any closed country and declare the Gospel.” until the country opens up. Whatever happened to what Jesus said in our next chapter, **Matthew 10**, about taking the Gospel to the cities where the people would receive the message, and if they didn’t, shake the dust from their feet and go to where they would receive it. How in the world have we gotten so messed up about the Great Commission? Jesus promised that the fields would be plenteous, not just to win two Muslims to Christ per year so that we can brag on that to our churches. But we have been given the promise of a very fruitful harvest if we will go where He tells us to go and where He opens the doors, rather than us trying to move people from the fields where God sent them to places God never called them. Some fields may be harder than others, but if God places a missionary in the field where He wants them, then there will be fruitfulness and many times the harvest will be plenteous.

C. Our Lord’s Proclamation Was Plain. v. 37c

In the latter part of verse 37, we discover that Jesus emphatically said that there are not enough harvesters to reap the crops that are ready to be taken in. Jesus was making a plain statement telling his new disciple missionaries that their responsibility was large, the harvest was plenteous, and that there were not enough people committed to the task of winning the world to Him. Just try to imagine this! This was near the end of Jesus’ singular earthly ministry and just before He was turning the task of world evangelism over to His disciples, and there were not enough committed people to get the job done then. If we take a good look around us today, I am afraid that we will find even less people proportionately than Jesus had in the first century.

Where are the laborers? George Barna tells us that 97% of all Evangelical Christians never lead a person to Christ in their entire life time. This is such a terrible tragedy! It is a tragedy for those who need to be saved but are not getting the message. And beyond this, it is a terribly sad thing that so few believers ever get to enjoy the excitement of winning someone else to Christ. And even worse, we are told that the average professing believer only gives one cent per day to world missions. So, what a tragic situation that we are in because professing Christians want to enjoy having eternal fire insurance because they got saved, but they are perfectly content, seemingly, to never tell someone else about what they have found in Christ. Therefore, we all should feel ashamed and embarrassed because of our lack of concern and interest in seeing the multitudes come in from wandering in their lostness. Later in **Matthew 28:18-20**, Jesus commissioned all us to go and

teach the world about Him, and then disciple those who get saved. Are we doing a good job with this? I would say we are not.

IV. NOTICE THE PRAYER FOR MANPOWER. v. 38

In this last verse for this study, we come to see that Jesus gave His disciples explicit instructions for them to give themselves to praying fervently for Him to call and send forth laborers into the fields of service. This is a remarkable request because Jesus could have Sovereignly called and sent forth every reaper that would be needed, but instead of doing this, He called on the disciples to pray and register the request with our Lord before He would grant their prayer and send the servants into the harvest fields. Why do you suppose that He did this? Well, let us take a look at this verse and discover the answer to this question.

A. Jesus commanded the disciples to pray and ask for workers because He wanted to reveal to them their personal responsibility. v. 38a

I know that this might sound a little trite, but our Lord cherished the thought of using His disciples in His plan to win the world to Himself. He could have done it any other way He wanted to, but He decided that He would let His disciples and us as well, get in on this wonderful responsibility and privilege. This is why that in over 50 years of ministry, I have never gotten over the wonder that God chose me and my family to be a part of His plan for world evangelism and service. **II Corinthians 5:20**, tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ! In other words, we have been chosen here in this world to represent His Kingdom as His ambassador. There is no joy on earth that I believe can compare with the joy of trying to win men, women, boys and girls to Christ. Therefore, it is truly a privilege to accept the responsibility to try to tell the world about the Gospel message of Christ, and then get in on seeing the harvest right before our very eyes. And, to be given the responsibility to pray for God to call others to the harvest fields is truly a great privilege that we should not take lightly. Let me say it again! Christ could have called and sent everyone needed to the fields without our help. But, He loved us enough to give us the privilege to pray for Him to send forth more laborers.

And while I am writing about this today at my computer, the thought has come to me that God has gloriously blessed us with the privilege to pray for other harvesters to come forth from our family members, work colleagues, classmates, and yes, even our neighbors down the street. Without God's amazing grace extended to us which allows us to pray intercessory prayers for others, we would not be able to see the joy and excitement of seeing our family members, work colleagues, classmates, and our neighbors surrender their lives to Christ in answer to our prayers. So, I think I will just shout hallelujah! Amen!

Before I move on to the next point, I would just like to say that while I am talking about the call of God sending forth other laborers into the fields, I can't help but think of a special young man in our church that God has given me the privilege to mentor and try to help train for the Gospel ministry. I am very proud of this

young man, and I count it an enormous privilege to be able to intercede for him and his family as he prepares to be one of God's special harvesters. It is my prayer that God might use him mightily!

B. Jesus commanded the disciples to pray and ask for workers because He wanted to reveal to them the need for a powerful reverence. v. 38b

The second part of this verse is so very important. As Jesus told His disciples to pray for more workers for the harvest fields, He told them to direct their prayers to the Lord of the harvest. This command reveals a very precious thought. That is, if we are going to pray for workers in the fields, we must address or direct our prayers to the only One that can answer our prayers and send forth the laborers. And to call upon the Lord of the harvest is to acknowledge our reverence and respect for not only the One that can provide the workers, but He must provide the fruitfulness of the harvest as well. In other words, it is like what Paul said in **I Corinthians 3:6**, when he said, **"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."** In other words, it is only the Lord of the harvest Who provides the crops when the harvest comes in as a result of our labors. There is just no way that we can reap the crops unless the Lord of the harvest gives the increase.

So, if we are going to pray for more manpower for the fields that are ripe unto harvest, we must direct these prayers to the only One that can call the workers, and then provide the harvest when these workers go to work. We must totally understand that the harvest is not about our efforts only, but it is because of our obedience to the One Who has called us and because we trust Him to provide the harvest as a reward for those who go to the fields to work. We may not be able to see every effort we demonstrate rewarded down here in this life, but there will come a day at the Judgment Seat of Christ for the believers, when we will be rewarded for our faithfulness in the fields of harvest. And folks, rest assured, our Lord will not forget anything we have done. He surely keeps good records, and as the great Lord of the harvest, He will reward accordingly based upon our work with the right motives and sincere dedication. Aren't you glad that He will never forget? I surely am, and truthfully, I look forward to that day when we shall be rewarded. And beyond this, I look forward to the day when I get to meet all of the people that may have come to Christ through our efforts.

C. Jesus commanded the disciples to pray and ask for workers because He wanted them to offer a pressing request. v. 38c

This pressing request was for more laborers to be sent forth into the fields to help harvest the crops. Obviously, Jesus knew the tremendous shortage of workers when the fields would be so ready for the harvest. As I stated earlier, it was true during Jesus' earthly ministry, and it is probably more urgent that we get more workers today than ever before. Why? Because time is running out and Jesus is coming again. Therefore, we must pray for God to not only call forth more laborers, but we must also pray that His servants will respond without reservation to this call.

Then, when these people report for duty, He can send them forth into the fields of harvest. Yet, it is very important to know that God doesn't always call the equipped, but He wants to equip those He calls. And, if these called harvesters are going to be properly groomed and trained, then the people receiving the call must be willing to pay the price to get properly trained. And I must say that in this generation, I see a lot of people who don't want to pay the price for this training, but they are looking for some short cut that won't require so much of them. May God give us some truly committed servants who are willing to take whatever time is necessary, sacrifice whatever is required, and pay whatever the cost to become efficient harvesters to work in the fields. The Bible says in **Luke 12:48, "To Whom much has been given, much is required...."** Therefore, if the God of heaven and earth loves us enough to save us, and then call us to His service, then we should give everything to Him in our commitment. Some of the old preachers of the Gospel use to say, "we must abandon everything and follow Him," if we are going to be fruitful working in the fields. I hope that this is the way you feel, because for sure, this is the way I feel still after all of these years in the ministry. Will you please join me in not only appealing to our Lord to send forth more workers, but may our level of surrender be far above the commitment of the average professing Christian. I still believe that God can and will use totally committed people in His service far beyond any person's expectation if they will abandon all and follow Him whatever the cost.

Conclusion:

Let me conclude this wonderful lesson by asking you a question: "Where are the laborers"? I know where they are! They are all around us just waiting for us to help get them to Christ and then pray to the Lord of the harvest to call them to His service and send them forth into the fields. They are everywhere, but they want to become workers in the fields until we accept the responsibility to pray for God to redirect them to the harvest fields where He has planned for them to go. Therefore, my beloved friends, we must commit ourselves totally and completely to Christ, abandon all, pay the price to become better equipped, and then follow the will of God to the fields where He is sending us. Then, we must beseech our God in heaven to save and call other workers to join us in this worldwide endeavor of taking the Gospel to the world. And may I jump upon my soap box one more time and say, "God will send us and those around us to the fields where the harvest is plentiful, and not to those places where the doors are closed and the fish are not biting. Whoever would have thought that our so-called Christian leaders would be directing the workers away from the open doors to the doors that are closed where covert mission activity must go on in order to get one or two saved every year? There is no wonder that people are stopping their giving to world missions when because one man, Ralph Winter, decided in 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland to convince the entire Christian world that all of our mission strategy must be changed in order to fulfill the Great Commission. If this damnable lie would have been propagated in Africa before the Masai Revival, thousands upon thousands of Kenyans and Tanzanians

would have never gotten saved and given their hearts to Christ. May God forgive Ralph Winter and those who bought this failed mission strategy to an endless degree and have shoved it down the throats of multitudes of pastors and churches. I can't even begin to imagine the greatness of the judgment of God upon these people who have squelched the missionary zeal of millions of people! Without a doubt, hell will have enlarged herself because of this false mission strategy and activity. I just wish that good Godly people and church leaders would open their eyes and see the tragic mistake that has taken the excitement away from millions of believers who no longer see the importance of winning the masses to Jesus one life at a time. If we are not to give invitations and invite people to make decisions for Christ, then why are we throwing away millions of dollars which could be used to help the poor in our neighborhoods.

It is my sincere prayer that if you have taken the time to read this sermon and pay attention to its content that you will allow God to use it to get you where you need to be in the harvest fields, and that He may have placed upon your heart a greater burden to pray to the Lord of the harvest to call and send forth other workers to help us with the big harvest; not the fields where the Gospel is rejected and the laborers are hated! I just believe that we need to be shaking the dust from our shoes in some of these closed-door places and move on to the fields that are plenteous and white unto harvest. May God richly bless you for reading this material.