

**Sharecropper vs. Sonship Faith**

by Gary Carpenter

Paul said that he that speaks in an unknown tongue is speaking unto God, and he is speaking "mysteries."

**1 Cor 14:2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.**

One thing that anyone will discover as they develop a consistent life of praying in the spirit is that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, is helping them pray the "mysteries" of the gospel. These prayers are intended to be answered just as much as any other type of prayer, such as the prayer of faith. The answer to these prayers, however, comes in the form of revelation knowledge as each mystery is prayed through to completion.

In my own life I have found that sometimes I will spend many hours in prayer, sometimes over several days, and all during that period of time, my "understanding is unfruitful."

**1 Cor 14:14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.**

Eventually, however, I will have "prayed through" that particular "mystery" and ... suddenly ... the understanding will come in the form of revelation knowledge. Sometimes these revelations come in the form of visions, sometimes I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit explain the understanding, and sometimes they simply come by "revelation" alone. That is, one moment I do not know something. The next moment, I do!

Such was the case in June of 1997. I was driving home from a meeting simply praying softly in the spirit when ... all of a sudden ... without warning ... the Spirit of the Lord said to me,

*"Giving and receiving is sharecropper faith. It is a valid level of faith to operate in, and most people will never graduate from it. What I desire is Sonship faith, where you know that you actually own the fields you are working in. You are not a sharecropper in the kingdom of God. You are a son. All that is mine is thine."*

Well, needless to say, I had never heard of anything like that in my life! I have learned the voice of the Holy Spirit well enough over these many years to know for sure that it was Him, but to be perfectly honest, I really had no idea how to implement what He said to me in any practical way. When that happens, I simply record what He says by making a written record, and then I continue to pray until He teaches me more. Over the course of the next six months, He continued to minister to my understanding, line upon line, precept upon precept the revelation knowledge that I needed. One of the passages of scripture that the Holy Spirit had me begin meditating on was;

**Luke 17:7-10 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? (8) And will not**

**rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? (9) Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. (10) So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.**

Say "We are unprofitable servants?" This sounded like a very strange confession to me. Was Jesus saying that our attitude should be that we are worthless, useless servants to our Father? Both Satan and religion would love for you to believe that because,

**Prov 23:7a For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...**

If you truly believe in your heart that you are a worthless, useless servant in the kingdom of God, that is exactly what you will become! Long ago I learned not to take isolated, difficult verses such as these and lift them out of their context trying to understand what they really mean. For true meditation of the Word of God, you MUST let the bible interpret the bible. In order to do that, I always begin backing up in the scriptures to find out when this subject began so I can meditate the difficult portion within the context of the overall teaching. In this case, you have to back up all the way to Luke 15:1,

**Luke 15:1-2 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. (2) And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.**

What do we see here? We see the Son of God, who by His own free will has chosen to leave His Father's house [heaven] to go into His Father's fields [earth] in order to reap a harvest of souls [from sinners] for His Father. The Son has become His Father's "Servant!" Is this "Serving Son" of great worth and value to His Father? Of course He is!

Dead religion, represented here by the Pharisees and scribes, does not at all understand the heart of the Father for lost sinners, nor the mission of Jesus Christ [the Serving Son] to save them, and they vigorously object to His laboring in the very fields [sinners] that the Father has sent Him into. Jesus begins to teach concerning their error and continues to do so in all of Luke chapters 15 and 16. In these chapters we find: The lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus.

Every one of these lessons teaches about how a true "servant" of the Father will steward his life, and his assets, in "being about the Father's business" to "seek and to save the lost." Jesus never changes the subject through all of Luke 15-16. He culminates His teaching in Luke 17:1-10. He knows that one day He will ascend back into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. The mission to "seek and to save the lost" will be passed to His disciples at that time. He is teaching them to become "serving sons" in like manner as Himself.

Now, with all of that in mind, let's go back to our original question. Does Jesus intend for these disciples to become worthless, useless servants to the Father? Is that the kind of servant He was in Luke 15:1-2? No! So what does He mean when He says, Say "We are unprofitable servants?"

The only way to understand it is to see what sort of "Serving Son" Jesus is in Luke 15:1-2. We do not find Jesus serving His Father for "personal profit." He is not a "hireling." He is not doing what He is doing "for wages." He is the Son of His Father, totally free, yet He has chosen for love's sake alone to give His life as a Servant laboring in His Father's fields to reap a harvest of souls from sinners. He is not for hire! He is serving His Father alone, and not mammon!

We have a hard time understanding such concepts because most of us still view Christianity as a religion. Christianity is not a religion. Christianity is a family! God is our Father. We are His children. As I continued to meditate on the scriptures and spend much time praying in the spirit, the Holy Spirit began showing me more about what He meant by the difference between "Sharecropper vs. Sonship" faith.

My paternal grandfather had twelve children, sons and daughters. He had a large ranch/farm of many acres in rural Oklahoma. This was a "family business" in which all of the children had work to do as they grew up. As each child grew, they were assigned increasing responsibilities in this "family business" as they matured. The sons would go into the fields to labor with grandfather. The daughters would work at home with grandmother. All of them had work to do. This was a family, not a religion.

At the end of every day, a huge meal was prepared. There were large bowls of mashed potatoes, gravy, fried chicken, steak, green beans and so forth. When the dinner bell rang, the sons and daughters came in from their labors. When they were all seated and the prayer of thanksgiving had been made, they all began to eat. Each one was to eat until he was full ... of anything and everything that he desired from grandfather's table. I can hear one voice saying, "pass the mashed potatoes, please" while at the same time another voice was saying "please pass the green beans." The bowls of food came around to each of them and they were expected to TAKE ALL THEY WANTED! Grandfather would have thought they were mentally ill if they did not eat because, for some reason, they thought he wanted them to go hungry or do without. Absurd!

The Kingdom of God is a "family business." I often use the phrase, "God & Sons, Inc." because it helps me to remember that even though I am God's servant, I am also one of His sons. I and my brothers labor in our Father's fields to reap the harvest with eternity in mind. We use all that He has provided for us in the way of talent, ability, equipment and finances to labor in the fields that we are heir to in order to reap the harvest of eternal souls that is His desire. As sons, we do not work individually for personal profit. No, this is a family business. We all labor in the fields and we all eat from the same dinner table [Grace]. We are all free to eat as much as we want from the table which our Father has provided for us.

Getting back to the scenario of the family dinner table, it is important to notice that the amount of food that each son ate was not proportional to how much he individually produced in the fields that day. What I mean is this; each son had different talents and abilities. One son might have the ability to run the combine that harvested the wheat. Another son might have lesser ability and his job was to simply grease the wheels of the combine. The son who drove the combine did not get five pieces of fried chicken while the son who greased the wheels only got one. No, as long as each of them carried out their respective assignments in the field with diligence, they all got to eat freely as much as they desired from the dinner table. Regarding

God's provision for serving sons, there is to be equality. Each of them is free to eat as much as he wants. There is no shortage of their Father's grace. The table is abundantly supplied for all of them.

Their respective talents and abilities did not determine how much they could eat from the table. No, their respective talents and abilities determined the level of their stewardship in the fields. There is no doubt that the level of responsibility is greater for the son who drives the combine than the level of responsibility for the son who greases the wheels. To whom much is given, much is required, but both of their assignments are absolutely necessary. The combine will eventually become useless unless the wheels are greased. As long as each of the sons does their jobs with diligence, there is absolutely no difference between them when it comes to their right to freely partake of all they desire from the table that has been provided for them by the Father.

Now that we have taken a look at how sons and daughters are provided for, let's take a look at another scenario ... that of a sharecropper. Suppose a man came to my grandfather and said that he had noticed there was a hundred acres of land that grandfather had not yet cleared for use.

This man had a wife and several sons, but he had no land of his own to farm. He also had no money with which to buy land with, so he makes a proposal to "sharecrop" the unused 100 acres. The agreement would be something like this, "I will do the work of clearing the land of stones, removing the tree stumps, burning off the thorns and brambles and plowing the ground. If you will provide the seed, then I will sow the ground and do all of the work to bring in a harvest. I will give you the crop when it comes in except for enough to provide for the needs of my family." This is traditionally what is called "Sharecropping." It is usually set up on a percentage basis, with the owner of the land getting the vast majority of the crop. After all, the tenant is providing nothing but labor.

Notice that the sharecropper is doing exactly the same kind of work as the sons of my grandfather. But the difference is, **THE SHARECROPPER AND HIS FAMILY DO NOT GET TO EAT FROM THE TABLE OF GRACE.** That table is reserved for "family." The sharecropper is working for profit, in a sense, and he will always have to eat the fruit of his own labor ... his own sowing and reaping from grandfather's land. He will never own the land. He is not an heir. He is, to a certain degree, simply a hired servant. When he "sows," he does so with his own "personal profit" in mind. This is precisely the attitude that Jesus did not want his disciples to have.

Because the doctrine of "sowing and reaping" has been taught so strongly to the Church, all of us have become "sharecroppers" in our thinking when it comes to Kingdom Finances. We have lost the revelation that we are sons of God who are simply being about our Father's business. We have departed from the grace of being sons and heirs, co-laboring in the Father's fields with our brothers to bring in the harvest with a single mind and a single purpose. We have forgotten that sons get to eat freely from the family dinner table which the Father provides. Jesus plainly told us how to receive from our Father's table of grace:

**John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, HE WILL GIVE IT YOU.**

**John 16:24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ASK, AND YE SHALL RECEIVE, that your joy may be full. [Emphasis mine]**

Doesn't that sound a lot like, "Father, pass the mashed potatoes, please?" A son, in any family, would not hesitate to make such a simple request. Jesus wants us to have the same attitude as sons of our heavenly Father. What do you need? Ask, Jesus said! He did not say go "sow first" and then the Father will "pay" you in proportion to your sowing. No, a thousand times NO! We are sons, laboring in our Father's fields of our own free will. It is our Father's great delight to meet all of our needs. There are no limits to His bountiful supply.

Even more sad than the situation regarding the sharecropper would be a true son of the Father who, by choice, decided to become a sharecropper instead. The elder son in Luke 15 had done that very thing. His relationship with his father had become one based on works, not grace. He did not come in for food and fellowship with the father at mealtime. He spent his time laboring in the fields, and expected to get "rewarded" [paid] for his efforts. He simply could not understand the concept of the grace bestowed on sons, and that he already was heir to all that his father owned. He chose to base his relationship with his father on his own works instead of on grace. He was a son who had chosen to become a sharecropper. He was left to eat from the fruit of his own sowing and reaping rather than come into the house at supper time to dine from the table of grace with his father and brethren.

It is important to notice that those who will not base their relationship with the Father on grace instead of works always become self-righteous in their own eyes and critical of those who simply "receive the abundance of God's grace." This elder son, who based his relationship with his Father on works, simply could not understand how the Father could receive the prodigal son by grace. Self-righteousness had so darkened his understanding that he was no longer in concert with the heart of his Father at all.

It is interesting to note that this carries over not only in the areas of sin but also in the areas of giving. Since the sharecropper is making his living by his sowing and reaping, he understandably becomes proud that he is doing a good job. But a son, especially a son who has been adopted into the family free by grace, would never become proud of his own "sowing." His own efforts, his own sowing and reaping, is not what made him eligible to dine from that table. No, it was the grace of the Father when He adopted him into the family as his son.

**Rom 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.**

Dear Reader, do you still live in fear that your heavenly Father will not provide for you, His own child? That sort of fear does not come from the Father. Jesus has given you words of faith to overcome such fear if you will only believe Him,

**Matthew 6:24-34 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (25) Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than**

meat, and the body than raiment? (26) Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (27) Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? (28) And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: (29) And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (30) Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (31) Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (32) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. (33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (34) Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Does all of this do away with "sowing and reaping?" Absolutely not, but it does change the motive behind our sowing. When we give financially (or any other way) into the kingdom of God, is our motive to "personally profit" from it? If so, then we have the mentality of a sharecropper and not a son. Remember, the Holy Spirit said it was a valid level of faith to operate in, and most would never graduate from it. Our Father allows "sharecropping" in His kingdom, just as my grandfather allowed sharecropping on his acreage.

But our Father's best is that we begin to mature in our understanding that we are His own sons and daughters. We are heirs! When we give financially (or any other way) into the "family business" [the kingdom of God], our motive is to reap a harvest of souls for our Father. THAT is "being about our Father's business." As for our own needs being met? What is that bell I hear ringing? Oh yes, it is supper time, and the Father is ringing the dinner bell to call all of His children to dine at the table of His grace. Pardon me ... time to eat!

**John 21:12a Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine...**

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