

2 Timothy 2:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.

Analysis

The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Paul's third metaphor shifts to agriculture. "Husbandman" (*geōrgon*, γεωργόν) means farmer or agricultural worker. "That laboureth" (*ton kopiōnta*, τὸν κοπιῶντα) emphasizes strenuous toil—*kopiaō* (κοπιάω) denotes exhausting labor producing weariness. Farming in antiquity was backbreaking work: plowing, planting, weeding, irrigating, harvesting—all manual labor under Mediterranean sun.

The principle stated is "must be first partaker of the fruits" (*dei prōton tōn karpōn metalambanein*, δεῖ πρῶτον τῶν καρπῶν μεταλαμβάνειν). The verb *dei* (δεῖ) indicates divine necessity—this isn't suggestion but principle. "First" (*prōton*, πρῶτον) means priority in time and right. Farmers rightfully eat from their harvest before selling produce. Those who labor deserve to benefit from their work.

Applied to ministry, Paul teaches that gospel workers deserve support from those they serve (1 Corinthians 9:7-14, 1 Timothy 5:17-18). More broadly, the metaphor emphasizes that fruitful ministry requires patient, persevering labor. Farmers don't see immediate results—they plant, water, wait for seasons to pass, then harvest. Similarly, faithful teachers plant gospel seeds, water through ongoing ministry, and eventually see spiritual fruit.

Historical Context

Agriculture dominated ancient economies. Most people farmed or depended on farming. Everyone understood farming's demands: long hours, physical exhaustion, dependence on weather, delayed gratification. Farmers worked spring through fall with little rest, investing labor before seeing return. Harvest was reward for months of toil. Ancient agricultural law recognized farmers' rights: workers could eat from fields they harvested (Deuteronomy 25:4), which Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How faithfully are you supporting gospel workers—pastors, missionaries, teachers—who labor to serve you spiritually?
2. In your own ministry, are you willing to invest patient, persevering labor without demanding immediate visible results?
3. What areas of Christian service require you to keep planting and watering in faith, trusting God for eventual harvest even when progress seems slow?

Interlinear Text

τὸν	κοπιῶντα	γεωργὸν	δεῖ	πρῶτον	τῶν	καρπῶν
G3588	that laboureth	The husbandman	must be	G4412	G3588	of the fruits
	G2872	G1092	G1163			G2590

μεταλαμβάνειν

partaker

G3335

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:36 (Parallel theme): For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

1 Corinthians 9:23 (Parallel theme): And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Matthew 20:1 (Parallel theme): For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

Luke 10:2 (Parallel theme): 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.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org