

## THE OVERLOOKED MINISTRY

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“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”

Because of the Corinthians’ misguided loyalties about ministries, Paul, in First Corinthians chapter 3, removes any idea that he and Apollos are in competition with each other. He describes both as servants of the Lord who preached the gospel as fellow laborers. They each did the job the Lord gave them to do. Why Paul reasoned, would the Corinthians place more faith in the servants instead of the Master?

We do notice Paul’s particular phrasing in his admonition to the Corinthians, where he stated that “I (Paul) have planted, Apollos watered...” Paul does not say that he and Apollos both “planted.” There seems to be a unique difference in the oneness of their labors in the gospel – one has “planted,” and the other has “watered.” We often think of preaching as primarily “seed sowing” (planting), however, as we witness from Paul’s writings, sometimes preaching is a compliment to previous “planting” by another preacher as it “waters” the already planted seed(s) and yet “he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”

This inspired combination of planting and watering is paramount in the spiritual growth of a local congregation. A pastor labors faithfully in sowing seed into the hearts of his congregants, and one of the varied functions of the five-fold ministry, at some appropriate time, is to labor in “watering” the planted seed. This watering is not so much a scattering of new seed, but rather a nourishing of the previously planted seed – not an introduction of new revelations or a presentation of new vistas of theology – but just simply providing refreshment to an already planted field.

This unique hand-in-hand operation of planting and watering can be witnessed in the ministries which are involved in the process when a pastor invites a fellow minister into his pulpit and that minister, as a guest, preaches very similarly of things the pastor has preached at some earlier time. The resulting effect of that union is that God gives the increase to seed that was planted and watered. Often all that is needed, as God wills, is that a preacher causes nourishment to already planted seed by his delivery to the saints.

The ministry of watering is often an overlooked ministry, but it is one that God blesses as it performs a much-needed operation of the Spirit. To preach something “new” is not always the mind of the Spirit – sometimes it is, simply put, to preach that which “renews.”

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