

THE

HARVESTER

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

February 1986

No. 002

[Editor's Note: Currently, the congregation meeting at Westview Gardens Church of Christ in Montgomery, AL is in the midst of moving. Here is part of a sermon that was presented by one of the members.]

CHRISTIAN AMBASSADORS

As we consider the possibility of buying property and relocating for the purpose of winning more souls, we must realize that many challenges and responsibilities lie ahead of us as individuals and collectively as a congregation. Our first goal must be to: *"Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord being ready*

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always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15)

There may be times when we feel distressed and wonder if we are doing the right thing. At these times the Bible must be our source of strength. It must be our sole authority for the things that we bring to this new community. God is the author of the Scriptures and it is *"thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* (II Tim. 3:16-17)

There will be those who will try to persuade us to rely on ideas and philosophies of men. They will claim that changing times and circumstances make innovations and supplemental works of man necessary for our society today. But there is no need nor place for that. God's divine power has *"given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."* (II Pet. 1:3)

We must *"Put on the whole armour of God"* that is described in Eph. 6:13-17, being careful to leave none of it off. We must be very sure that our sword (the Word of God) is sharp and that we are ready to use it for the Truth. We must realize that the Word of God is *"Quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* (Heb. 4:12)

Finally we must be as Paul in Eph. 6:18-20, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints ... that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel."

Christ meant for us to reach out--to "Go into the world and preach the Gospel." Our world is here around us. Let us pray that we will be strong Christian ambassadors and that we may speak as Paul describes in Eph. 6:20--"Boldly as I ought to speak".

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES ...

ABOUT PERSEVERANCE

Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. (1 Chr. 16:11)

The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: (Psa. 37:28)

Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually. (Hos. 12:6)

He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matt. 24:13)

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: (Rom. 2:6,7)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58)

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Stand fast therefore in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Gal. 5:1)

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Gal. 6:9)

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: (Phil. 1:6)

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; (2 Tim. 3:14)

The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: (2 Tim. 4:18)

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (Heb. 10:23)

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (Jas. 1:12)

Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. (Jas. 5:10,11)

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (Rev. 2:10,11)

NOT OF MEN

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me." (Mark 11:29,30) Knowing that taking either position would condemn them, the chief priests and scribes and elders would not reply to this question from Jesus. However, the correct answer was obvious to all. John was a prophet of God, a messenger of whom the Old Testament had predicted would come.

Today we must continue to ask ourselves about the many "churches" we see: "was it from heaven, or of men?" And likewise, the correct answers shall be obvious to all who sincerely "search the scriptures". The answers will be so plainly revealed in the Word of God that there will be no denying the truth like those who "said unto Jesus, We cannot tell" (Mark 11:33).

We might first ask, "Who purposed (designed) the church? Was it a mortal man or did it come from heaven?" The answer can be easily seen in Eph. 3:10-11, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our

Lord". This means that the blueprint of the true church was drawn up in heaven and not in the mind of some great religious leader born on this side of the cross.

Now, what kind of a foundation does "your church" have? Of heaven or of men? Certainly the house of God is not built on any man, not even Peter or Paul! *"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"* (1 Cor. 1:12,13) The church is clearly built on Jesus Christ as the only foundation. *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor. 3:11)

Here is another question worth pondering. Did man purchase the church or was it heaven-bought? We need only look in Acts 20:28 for the correct answer. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* Also, *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"* (Eph. 5:25).

Similarly, it is impossible for man to take the credit of giving the church its doctrine. Yet, many religious bodies are known for their affiliations with the doctrines of specific

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men. Only the teachings of Christ are to be taught and it is so stated in Gal. 1:9-12. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed ... But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." John also writes to this effect; "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11)

How do people become members of the church? Do they "join", get "voted" in, or are they "added" by the Lord? Which way is "from heaven" and which are "of men"? Let us read from the Bible. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47) "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." (1 Cor. 12:18) Unfortunately, many prefer the politics of "voting" someone into "their church" instead of trusting Christ to take care of His own business!

Finally we must question the source of the name we wear as members in the church. Is it a name "from heaven, or of men?" The answer should be obvious when we read: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26) Peter adds: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16) Any name other than

"Christian" alone means it is "of men" and unfit for God's people.

We now have all the facts to determine whether "this church or that" is man-made or heaven-sent. The scriptural church was designed by Christ, built on Him, bought by Him, given its doctrine by Him, adds its members by Him and calls them Christians only. Are we a part of this New Testament church? If not, do we realize that *"every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matt. 15:13)? That includes every religious group today except one: the one not "of men".

RAY

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C A L E N D A R

1. Sammy Dick of Cave City, KY will hold a meeting starting on July 6 at West Broad Street Church of Christ in Wedowee, AL. The meeting will last through July 11, 7:30pm each evening.

2. Is your congregation having a Gospel meeting? To have it announced through this paper, please send all information to The Harvester at least one month in advance.

3. We, at the Sun Hill Road Church of Christ, Birmingham, AL, always welcome you to our services at 10:30am & 6:00pm on Sundays and at 7:30pm on Wednesdays.