

THE

# HARVESTER

"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]

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No. 109

## BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

*"Blessed are the peacemakers,"* our Lord said, *"for they shall be called the sons of God!"* (Mat. 5:9) This verse is often quoted by those who are seeking to persuade someone not to bring up a controversial subject. Just don't bring it up, that way we can keep peace and harmony in the church.

But these were not the only words our Lord spoke concerning peace. He also said, *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her*

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*mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household"* (Mat. 10:34-36)

These two passages seemingly contradict one another, but there really is no contradiction. I believe Paul gave us the key to understanding this when he said, *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"* (Rom. 12:18). Paul did not mean by this, as many may think he did, that we must act in a peaceful way toward someone for a while, but then if the person continues to show animosity toward us we can consider him our enemy and treat him as such. What Paul did mean was that we must do our part to make peace. But just as it takes two to fight, it also takes two to make up. If the other party involved does not wish to live at peace then you will not live at peace. However, this still does not absolve you of your responsibility to continue to try to live peaceably with that person.

When asked by Peter, if it was only required that he forgive his brother who had sinned against him seven times, Christ replied, *"I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven"* (Mat. 18:22). We must never give up our efforts to be peacemakers, regardless of how anyone treats us. Just like our Lord forgave those who crucified Him, this is what the Lord was speaking of in Matthew chapter 5.

But in chapter 10 He is speaking of one of those times when people will be so distressed they will refuse all your attempts as a peacemaker. It's not that you have given up, but that they have. What could possibly cause such serious problems and divisions among family members? The words which Christ spoke were to be the source of all this controversy.

Indeed the word of God has inspired more

controversy than anything else in the history of the world. It would certainly boggle the mind to know how many millions of people have died over the centuries in the name of Christianity. This involves everything from the witch hunts of Salem, the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, the Crusades and many others. How many friendships and family ties have been severely damaged or destroyed due to disputes over God's word?

However, the saddest and most disturbing disputes occur among brethren. This century has seen the Lord's church suffer many such disputes. There have been wholesale divisions and splits over various doctrinal issues; Sunday School and women teachers, the pastor system, divorce and remarriage, the second supper, one vs. multiple containers, and others.

It is understandable that men will differ in their perception of the Bible, but what is not understandable is the results of some of these disagreements. If two men cannot agree on the meaning and application of some point of scripture, and they feel that it is of enough significance that they could not, in all good conscience, continue to work with each other, then the only thing for them to do is to cease working together until they are able to resolve their differences. No one should ever be asked to support or agree with a position which they do not genuinely hold.

The real problem arises when someone demands that everyone else adhere to their viewpoint, and then ostracizes those who don't. A simple doctrinal disagreement between two men soon becomes a personal war of words between many men with congregations disfellowshipping each other left and right.

Again, I acknowledge the legitimacy of not fellowshipping those whose doctrines and

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practices you find unscriptural based on your understanding of the Bible. But does that mean they have to become your enemy? Does that mean it is a sin to even speak to them?

In the past few decades there has been way too much bitterness and personal feuding in the name of doctrinal purity. As long as the feuding continues it will be impossible for a meaningful discussion of the issues to take place. How can we say we are doing our part to make peace if we even refuse to talk to those who disagree with us?

As this century has unfolded we have seen many divisions in the Lord's body and with it an overall weakening of the church as well. It is as Christ said, *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand"* (Mat. 12:25)

Everyone must take a firm stand on the truth as they understand it. No one should ever be asked to compromise his sincerely held views for the sake of unity. However, we should all be willing to sit down with those with whom we disagree, regardless of how serious the disagreement is, how old it is, or how bitter it has been in the past, and discuss our differences in an open and frank manner. How else can the wounds be healed? As the Lord

said so well, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God!"*  
(Mat. 5:9)

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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who suggested to Saul to consult a man of God about the whereabouts of the lost donkeys?
2. Where did the Israelites get the blueprint for the tabernacle?
3. When Jesus was hungry during His final days in Jerusalem, on what sort of tree did He search for food?
4. What is one to do with the sin which so easily besets him?
5. Was Proverbs written for attaining wisdom and discipline?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was Rachel's father? LABAN (Gen. 29:10)
2. Three of David's soldiers went behind Philistine lines to get David a drink from the well by the gate of what city? BETHLEHEM (1 Chr. 11:18)
3. At the Last Supper, who did Jesus say the twelve disciples would judge? THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL (Lk. 22:30)
4. Paul said his preaching was in vain if what has not happened? CHRIST RAISED FROM THE DEAD (1 Cor. 15:14)

5. A soft answer turns away what? WRATH  
(Prov. 15:1)

## HOW TO MAKE THE CHURCH GROW

It is every Christian's desire to see the church grow, in physical numbers and in the spirit of the Lord. To see our congregations flourish in this manner gives us assurance that people are still interested in the salvation of their souls. But is there anything we can do to help the church grow? Perhaps the few suggestions below can help us get started.

1. ATTEND EVERY CHURCH SERVICE THAT WE CAN. We are told not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together*" as many seem to do nowadays (Heb. 10:25) because when we are absent we are, in effect, telling others that we do not really care about the Lord's church. But by making our attendance a regular event, we can help our congregation grow by setting the proper example. Our presence with saints of "*like precious faith*" (2 Pet. 1:1) will openly demonstrate our sincere interest in the church. Those who really want their congregation to grow will be there every time the doors open (Psa. 122:1).

2. CONVERT SOULS YOURSELF! Naturally the church will grow when we go out into the world and preach the Gospel and teach others about Jesus Christ and His commandments (Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:19-20). Those who obey will be "*added to the church daily*" by the Lord (Acts 2:47). But too often we rely on 'somebody else' to do the preaching for us. During gospel meetings we expect the evangelist to do all the work in converting souls to Christ because "*that's his job!*" And if the newly-converted person starts losing interest, then it's time to schedule that same evangelist back for another

meeting so he can finish the job! My friends, the church will grow only if each member makes it his or her own responsibility to warn others about their sins (Ezek. 33:8,9) and to personally accept that challenge.

3. **EDIFY THE OTHER MEMBERS.** The early church was advised to *"exhort one another daily"* (Heb. 3:13), especially as *"the day"* approached (Heb. 10:25). If we would follow that admonition, our congregations would grow significantly. If we would encourage one another and build up the other members of the body of Christ, the congregation would not appear to be shrinking! Unfortunately some members are so caught up in pleasing themselves (Rom. 15:1-3) that they may well be the reason why church growth is stunted in some areas. *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith:"* (Gal. 6:10) The church will certainly grow if others can see that we care very much about each other.

4. **INCREASE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS.** This suggestion does not apply merely to the collection plate. Our contributions to the church are much more than that! Some contribute their talent, their time, their efforts, their studies, their involvement, etc. within the scope of the work of the congregation. But what if each one of us did a little more than what we are doing right now? The church would grow! Brethren, are we doing our very best or just enough to get by? *"And if ye salute your brethren only, WHAT DO YE MORE THAN OTHERS? do not even the publicans so?"* (Matt. 5:47) By contributing more to our congregation, we will certainly help it to increase.

Obviously there is a lot that each one of us can do to help the church grow today. But we must start soon because the fields *"are white already to harvest:"* (Jn. 4:35)

RAY

# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place &amp; Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
January 6 - 8	Summerfield Rd. Church Selma, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
January 9 - 15	Greenville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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## TEMPER!

When I have lost my temper  
 I have lost my reason, too;  
 I'm never proud of anything  
 Which angrily I do.  
 When I have talked in anger,  
 And my cheeks were flaming red,  
 I have always uttered something  
 Which I wished I hadn't said.

In anger I have never done  
 A kindly deed or wise,  
 But many things for which I felt  
 I should apologize.  
 In looking back across my life,  
 And all I've lost or made,  
 I can't recall a single time  
 When fury ever paid.

So I struggle to be patient,  
 For I've reached a wiser age;  
 I do not want to do a thing  
 Or speak a word in rage.  
 I've learned by sad experience  
 That when my temper flies,  
 I never do a worthy thing,  
 A decent deed or wise.

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