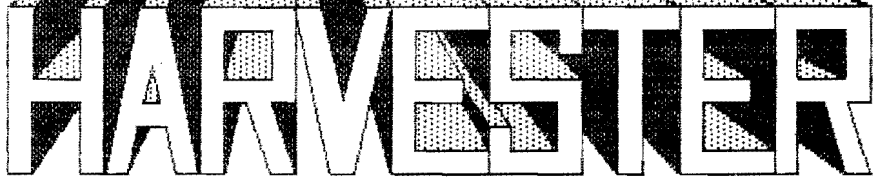


THE



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]

OCTOBER 1995

No. 118

VIRTUTE ET LABORE

(By Virtue and Labor)

"Virtue", a word that is not heard much these days. As words fall from our everyday use so does our ability to understand their meaning. To better focus our thoughts let's define "virtue". Virtue is defined as moral excellence, uncompromising in integrity, relentless in its pursuit of high standards.

As Christian men and women we accepted what could be called Christ's mantle. We have seen the works of Christ. His commitment to others without regard to His own personal sacrifice. His unconditional love wholly demonstrated in His death. The unfathomable depth of His mercy and His grace. The longsuffering in His

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attitude toward those of us who do not share the depth of His understanding of spiritual matters. As I rolled these thoughts over in my mind I find myself humbled. Actually, ashamed because my commitment to Christ and His truths has been found lacking. In other words my virtue is not equal to Christ's.

We often respond, "Well, no one is perfect", and before those words have even left that person's mouth I'm thinking, "we are supposed to be striving for perfection". There are those who say that we cannot reach perfection, however I maintain that there are some who left this world before their natural death occurred because God found them worthy.

The virtue demonstrated by the actions of our lives, I'm afraid may condemn us. A ruthless cross-examination of our lives (an honest appraisal) is often required to help us maintain our focus.

By accepting the fact that *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"*, has allowed us to unconsciously accept the fact that the pressure is off of us. We do not strive for perfection. This mis-conception could allow us to drop our guard to back off from our commitment to virtue, the virtue that Jesus demonstrated in His life. As Christians we need to remember if we are not going forward in our spiritual lives then we are in effect going backward. Lukewarm Christians are repulsive to God.

Peter in his 2nd epistle chapter 1:5-8 wrote: *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if*

these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In essence we can see that for us to be virtuous we must seek out the knowledge that Christ has taught us through His example. This knowledge we have of the virtuous life that Christ led will help us to be more virtuous Christians, and as Christ is, we too can become shining examples of virtuous men and women.

Concerning labor in regards to virtue, it is written in James chapter 2 verse 18: *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."*

Is a virtuous life attainable by work or by lip service? All of us realize that we must labor, to hone ourselves into the moral excellence of character that God expects.

We cannot justify our actions by those of others. Each of us should strive to maintain our lives on a high plain of moral and ethical standards. Work or labor is often exhausting, sometimes demoralizing. We are in this flesh and unfortunately we compromise ourselves with the often lower standards of the world. Although I grow weak and my faith and actions grow erratic, I still seek to live a Christian life. Each day I try to re-focus my mind, and my commitment to God. We must start out each day with the thought that we must "begin with the end in mind", which is our goal of living in such a manner that we may obtain a home in heaven. Let us all reflect on these things and to realize our responsibilities to God and to each other and to ourselves. We have the strength, we have the tools to overcome

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evil. Let us each one take stock and re-commit ourselves to a more virtuous way of life and by doing this we will emulate Christ and His truths.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Under what king was the Passover observed as it had not been since the days of the judges?
2. In the parable of the Rich Fool, what did he lack for his crops or fruits?
3. How does Peter say to meet one's adversary?
4. If a stone in the wall of an Israelite's house was judged to be leperous after the proper examination period, what was to be done?
5. What was the occupation of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What country was Nebuchadnezzar king of?
BABYLON (Dan. 1:1)
2. What did Jesus say the Pharisees shut in men's faces? THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Matt. 23:13)
3. Paul's teaching caused a great uproar in Ephesus over what goddess? DIANA (Acts 19:27)
4. Which animal is not mentioned in the Bible: ape, fox, hare, tiger, or whale? TIGER
5. When Isaac realized he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau, what was his physical reaction? TREMBLED EXCEEDINGLY (Gen. 27:33)

**"IF A WOMAN CANNOT SPEAK,
THEN HOW CAN SHE SING?"**

While instructing early Christians regarding teaching in the assembly of the church, Paul wrote, *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak ... for it is a shame for women to speak in the church"* (1 Cor. 14:34-35). The lawyer in Luke 10:29, *"willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?"* Some today, attempting to justify women in assuming a role not intended by God, ask a question similar in nature: "If a woman cannot speak, then how can she sing?"

This question is presented upon the assumption that Paul, in two of his letters, acknowledged singing as teaching.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making"

melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19, KJV).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16, KJV).

Let us be reminded that the Scriptures in their early form did not contain marks of punctuation, nor were the words in some manuscripts even, divided by spaces. Such were inserted by translators and, consequently, were placed as the translators considered proper. As expressed by the following translations, it is evident that the translators differed on the two verses in question.

Ephesians 5:19.

"Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of the Lord!" (Eph. 5:19, THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MODERN ENGLISH, J.B. Phillips).

"Joining with one another in holy songs of praise and of the Spirit, using your voice in songs and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19, THE BIBLE IN BASIC ENGLISH).

Colossians 3:16.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16, NIV).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16, RSV).

Each of the last four quotations is from translations where the idea that "singing is teaching" is not even remotely suggested.

Singing is an expression of joy and praise, and its primary function is not that of teaching. But let it also be admitted that in everything we do as Christians there is a certain amount of incidental teaching:

- * As we arrive at the assembly on time and thus demonstrate our interest
- * As we bow in prayer and sing with gladness
- * As we listen attentively to those who speak
- * As we sing words which teach and encourage
- * In our personal lives as we hold our temper and respond in love.

We should also be mindful that singing is one of the items enjoined upon every Christian. Both Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 are prime passages in this regard. But consider carefully -- would God command something in one passage which He would condemn being done in another? Certainly not! If singing is the teaching under consideration, then how can we understand God in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 to enjoin singing upon a woman and then condemn her for singing in 1 Cor. 14:34-35? This shows emphatically that singing is not what is condemned. To the contrary, singing is enjoined upon the Christian woman.

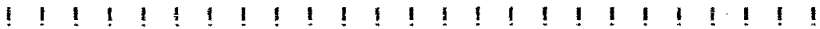
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
October 6 - 8	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
October 13 - 15 (F - Su)	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL 7:00 pm	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
October 22 - 27	Liberty Church Liberty, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
November 3 - 5 (F - Su)	Sun Hill Road Church Birmingham, AL 7:00 pm	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)



Where there is no rule:
There is confusion and decay.

Where every one rules:
There is anarchy and disunion.

Where the majority rule:
There is digression and politics.

Where the minority rule:
There is oppression and politics.

Where one elder rules:
There is dictatorship and destruction.

Where the eldership rules:
There is wisdom and scripturalness.

Where the Christ rules:
There is love and salvation.

Where the Spirit rules:
There is zeal and unity.