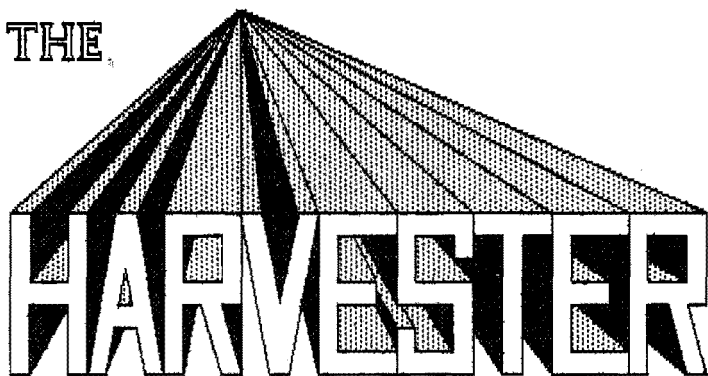


THE



"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]

DECEMBER 1996

No. 132

THE CORDS OF THE CROSS

The story of our Lord's death should be forever and vividly fixed in our minds. It is a story of unique challenges. First the high priest challenged Jesus' identity as to whether He was their Messiah (Matt. 26:63). Pilate the governor also challenged our Savior in the same respect, asking if He was the King of the Jews (Matt. 27:11). Then the Jews challenged Pilate to release the criminal Barabbas and crucify Jesus instead (Matt. 27:23). But the ultimate challenge came when Jesus finally hung on the cross and the people passed by and mocked Him. Among the taunts He received, Jesus was demanded in Matt. 27:40, *"If thou be the Son of*

THE HARVESTER
1120 Sun Hill Road
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Birmingham, AL
PERMIT No. 4624

God, come down from the cross." If this man was the Christ as He claimed, certainly He could escape this severe punishment. But He didn't move. Why?

Jesus definitely had the power to come down from the cross. He could have summoned twelve legions of angels to help Him, if He wanted (Matt. 26:53). He had the power to lay down His own life or to take it up again (John 10:18). There is no doubt He was the Son of God, yet He chose to remain nailed to His tree of death, suffering in agony. Why?

The Scriptures reveal to us at least three reasons why Jesus could NOT come down from the cross when He was challenged, although He truly was the Son of God. There were three 'cords' or spiritual chains that held Him bound to Calvary's cross. Like the physical nails which fastened His human body, these three cords were 1) God's will, 2) our sins, and 3) Jesus' love. These were the spiritual bonds which prevented Jesus from coming down off His cross. (Ironically, remaining on the cross did more to prove His deity than if He had come down!)

The first cord was God's will. Jesus knew that *"by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"*, He would be crucified and slain by wicked hands. Jesus knew it was His Father's will that God's only Begotten Son would taste death for the first time. Jesus clearly understood this when He prayed in Gethsemane, *"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."*(Luke 22:42) For Jesus to have come down from the cross when He was challenged would have been totally against God's will. The cord of His Father's will was too strong to allow Him to perform the task asked of Him.

The second cord was our sins. Our transgressions held God's Son bound to the tree. As He hung there, forsaken by all, Jesus was bearing my sins and yours. *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"* (Heb. 9:28). In order that we might gain eternal life, our Savior could NOT escape His execution. He could NOT come down from the cross because our sins held Him there! Jesus, *"his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed:"*(1 Pet. 2:24) He had to remain on the cross to redeem our sins. *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."*(Gal. 3:13-14) Yes, He was the Son of God but He was also the Redeemer of the entire world!

Our Lord's extraordinary love for mankind was the third cord that chained Him to that awful tree. It was a love so great and magnificent that He was willing to give up His own life for people like you and me! *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."* (John 15:13) Because He did not come down from the cross, we know assuredly that the Lord God loves us. What better proof can there be? *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (1 John 3:16). It was Jesus' love for us that kept Him from accepting the people's challenge to come down from the cross.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Lk. 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus
 301 Varden Hill Road
 Birmingham, AL 35214-1947
 Phone: (205) 791-1399

In our everyday life we should never forget that scene of the crucifixion and the things that transpired toward our Savior. As our Lord hung on the cross, physically distressed and ready to yield up the ghost, He was challenged to come down and thereby prove that He really was the Son of God. But the real proof came when He chose to remain fastened to that cross. Jesus did not come to earth to save His own life but to *"seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). He stayed on the cross, bound by the cord of God's will for ME, the cord of MY sins, and the cord of Christ's love for ME. In other words, He died on the cross for ME! And it is up to ME to make sure His death is not in vain, with regard to my own soul.

RAY McMANUS

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF THE BIBLE

Read it through.
 Pray it in.
 Work it out.
 Note it down.
 Pass it on.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who did Nebuchadnezzar kill before Zedekiah's eyes?
2. Where did Laban overtake Jacob and his family: Mt. Gilead, Paddonaron, or Bethel?
3. Who stopped Paul from going to the Thessalonians, according to 1 Thessalonians?
4. During the ritual for the day of atonement, when the priest put his hands on the head of the scapegoat, what was he symbolically doing?
5. What book follows Titus?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who did Hagar despise after she became pregnant by Abram? SARAI (Gen. 16:5)
2. Because God fought for the Israelites, one Israelite could put to flight how many enemies? ONE THOUSAND (Josh. 23:10)
3. What parable refers to anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God? THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL (Lk. 12:16-21)
4. What book of the Bible records Paul's sermon from Mars' Hill? BOOK OF ACTS (chapter 17)
5. What physical characteristic stood out in King Saul? HE WAS A HEAD TALLER THAN ANY OF THE OTHERS (1 Sam. 9:2)

"HAVE YE NOT HOUSES TO EAT AND TO DRINK IN?"

Just after the assembly this evening, while a number of us were enjoying a period of friendly conversation in the center aisle of the church building, one of the sisters expressed her concern about our occasional eating of a common meal in the basement. She asked questions about our doing what appeared to her might possibly be condemned in 1 Cor. 11:21-22. She emphasized that Paul stated in verse 22, "*Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?*" She wondered, therefore, if we should not have our common meals in our personal houses rather than in the church building.

It was explained to this dear and concerned sister that Paul's remarks referred to making a common meal out of the communion, of observing a common meal at the time of the assembly -- not to eating a meal at the same place where the communion had been observed.

As it had been shown in an earlier study on this subject, Paul himself partook of a common meal after the assembly at Troas in Acts 20:11. The purpose of those gathered at Troas was to observe the communion (as Jesus had predicted in Luke 22:16, Matt. 26:29, Mark 14:25 would be done by His disciples), and no doubt they fulfilled that intent. After Eutychus had been restored to life, however, it is recorded that Paul "*was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed*" (v. 11). It should be noted that this verse refers to

Paul's personal conduct and does not include all those who had been assembled. The breaking of bread and eating was not spoken of the whole congregation but was done by Paul at the same place where the communion had been observed by the church and was apparently done with view to his departing on his anticipated journey at "*break of day.*" In doing this Paul did not violate his own teaching in 1 Cor. 11:22.

Our sister was then asked if she had not just asked me a question. She admitted that she had. Then she was reminded that Paul had also taught in 1 Cor. 14:35, "*And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands AT HOME: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*" It was pointed out that she was NOT AT HOME, yet she had asked a question in the church building. She smiled, realizing that if "AT HOME" regarding teaching simply meant away from the assembly, then "*HOUSES TO EAT AND TO DRINK IN*" would also refer simply to a time apart from the assembly.

If we cannot eat a common meal in the church building after the assembly, then by that same principle a sister cannot ask her own husband a question in the church building (or even in the church yard) after the assembly. She must wait until she arrives "*AT HOME.*"

HARRY COBB

Box 75

Wedowee, AL 36278

Nowadays the rising generation retires when the retiring generation rises.

