

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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THE WINDS OF PERSECUTION

The disciples of Jesus must have wondered what was happening to them in Mark 4:35-41. Here they were, dutifully following their Lord across the Sea of Galilee in their little boats when suddenly "there arose a great storm of wind." It isn't suppose to be like this, they must have thought. Weren't they doing the right thing in obeying the Master and hugging close to His side? Yet why was this storm making their progress difficult, as if God was trying to hinder their efforts? Why did the wind decide to blow now?

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I wonder how many times we have felt the same way? We know what the Bible says about how we ought to behave and we attempt to do that which is right in the sight of God. We know how important it is to follow in Jesus' footsteps and emulate His life of purity and godliness. Yet it seems that the harder we try to live a Christian life, the harder the winds of persecution blow against us.

Perhaps many of us were initially disillusioned by the lure of Christianity. We thought that after we became a member of Christ's church, it would be "smooth sailing." Like the disciples in Mark chapter 4, we may have expected an easy journey with fine weather as we followed Jesus across the sea. However, nowhere in the Scriptures did God promise Christians a life here on this earth that would be free of troubles and sorrows.

As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul reveals to us that quite the opposite is true: *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3:12). This means that if we are followers of the Lord's church, we will be persecuted much like the Thessalonians were as described in 1 Thes. 2:14-16. In today's society, if we are associated with Christianity, whether it is through our scriptural stands or biblical views, we can expect harassment from those who are mistakenly zealous. (Note the case of Paul in Acts 26:9-11.)

Most importantly, because we are not of this world, people will automatically hate us. They will persecute Christians

just as they oppressed our Lord. Jesus explained it this way: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you ... (John 15:18-23)

So why does God allow his people to be persecuted? Since he is the Almighty, he could stop the teasing and humiliation and maltreatment that today's world thrusts upon those who take a Christian stand for righteousness. But there are some valid reasons why the Lord's church will always suffer persecutions. Experiencing hardships because we are Christians will make us even stronger disciples of Christ. Persecution is God's way of using fire to melt away the impurities in our less-than-perfect lives (1 Pet. 1:6,7).

Exposure is another reason why God allows us to suffer trials and temptations and why we should learn to overcome the winds of persecution. Now that autumn is here and the leaves begin their descent off the trees, we know that it will not be long before the freezing cold and winds of winter will reveal to us which trees are evergreen and which are not. Likewise, the burdens and hardships that will befall a member of the Lord's church will expose how strong his faith truly is, much like the seed that fell on stony ground and was exposed through tribulations in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:20,21).

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

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The Bible tells us, then, what kind of an approach Christians should take concerning persecutions.

1. We should rejoice in the opportunities that it affords us: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5:11,12)

2. We should "pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Matt. 5:44).

3. We should be patient and endure the tribulation (1 Cor. 4:11,12).

4. We should glorify God that we have the chance to be persecuted as a disciple. "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)

5. No matter how severe the persecution, we should remain true to God. "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." (Rev. 2:10)

As we travel the pilgrim's pathway with Christ, we should not be surprised to suddenly see a strong gust of wind ahead. That obstacle is simply "the winds of persecution", an inevitable part of every Christian's life. It is God's way of preparing us for the long journey home.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which of Solomon's officials rebelled against him?
2. What country is the setting for the book of Daniel?
3. When he spoke of Christ's coming in his epistle, what had Peter not followed?
4. Those who mourn will what?
5. According to Deuteronomy, what two materials were not to be woven together?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. What was the name of the ruler warned in a dream by God that Sarah was Abraham's wife? ABIMELECH (Gen. 20:3)
2. On what sea were the disciples fishing when Jesus told them to try the other side and they had a miraculous catch? SEA OF TIBERIUS (John 21:1) [Also known as the Sea of Galilee]

3. If one draws near to God, how will God respond? GOD WILL DRAW NEAR TO HIM (Jas. 4:8)

4. What is a man like who boasts of gifts he does not give? CLOUDS AND WIND WITHOUT RAIN (Prov. 25:14)

5. What was Rachel doing when Jacob first saw her? BRINGING SHEEP TO WATER (Gen. 29:9)

ARE YOU HABITUALLY LATE FOR SERVICES?

Worshipping God ought to be the most important part of our lives. The worship services should be the high point of our week. However, a lack of regard is often shown for periods of Bible Study and worship. How? By consistently being late for the services! What does habitual tardiness say about us?

IT SHOWS CARELESSNESS AND A LACK OF PLANNING. Employers expect promptness from workers. Occasionally one may be late for work, but if it becomes a habit you soon will be visiting the Employment Commission to find a new job. How can people be on time for their jobs, and consistently be late for their appointment with the Lord? Let us be more careful, and plan ahead so that we will be on time.

IT DISTURBS AND DISTRACTS. Each of us has an effect on how edifying periods of worship will be. Some families consis-

tently walk through the door in the middle of the opening prayer. Others show up after the lesson or singing has already begun. This has a disturbing effect on those who are trying to concentrate on the activities of the hour. How frustrating it is for the preacher to lose the attention of the audience because of the distraction of late comers. Let's not be the source of such disturbance!

IT GIVES VISITORS BAD IMPRESSIONS. Visitors not only observe the preacher and song leader, but the members as well. They notice tardiness! They see that the members don't care enough about the proceedings to put forth the effort to be on time. An impression of laxness is given. Let's seek to give the proper example.

How can we solve the problem? Get to bed at a decent hour on Saturday night, and set the alarm 15 minutes earlier on Sunday. Don't be late on Wednesday because of watching TV reruns! View periods of worship and Bible study as being important. Instead of being bored with worship, have David's attitude: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psa. 122:1).

Adapted from article in
 "Good Tidings of Good Things"
 July 17, 1997

**** AN EGOTIST IS SOMEONE WHO IS ALWAYS
 ME-DEEP IN CONVERSATION. ****

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
October 3 - 5	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
October 10 - 12	Summit, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 10 - 12	Summershade Church near Livingston, TN	Tim Eldridge (Algood, TN)
October 13 - 17	New Lebanon, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 17 - 19	West Broad St. Church Wedowee, AL	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
October 24 - 26	Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Oct. 31 - - Nov. 2	New Bethel Church Cullman, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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HOKES BLUFF CHURCH OF CHRIST

(located roughly 5 miles east of Gadsden, AL on Hwy. 278)

is having a

SINGING

Oct. 12 , 2:00-4:30pm

Everyone is invited!