

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)*

March 1987

No. 015

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

### A. Love Manifests Itself in Action

It is an old axiom that one may do without loving but that it is impossible to love without doing. Love naturally seek expression toward the object of its love. *"Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him"* (I Jno. 4:9). The proof of God's love was revealed to man when He sent Jesus to earth (Jno. 3:16). The Apostle John exhorts the early Christians, *"Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue: but in deed and truth"* (I Jno. 3:18). Love can be expressed in words but not in words alone. Love is best seen when it is demonstrated by actions.

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## B. Love Is Expressed in Obedience to God and Christ

Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (Jno. 14:15). Jesus told his Apostles, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). He continued by saying, "Why do you keep calling me Lord, Lord and never do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46) Love is shown in obedience to God.

## C. Love Includes Correction or Reproof of Sin

God's love is expressed to His children through His chastening. "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him; for whom God loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:5-6). God's love may be better seen in his chastening than in his blessings. When a parent punishes a child for darting into a busy street, he does it to save the child's life. THIS IS LOVE.

By the same token Christians are to help one another. This often includes reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting (II Tim. 4:2). This is done in love for the purpose of restoring and helping the sinning one to get back on the right path with God. It should be done gently and humbly but love requires the stronger to help the weak in the spiritual life (Gal. 6:1).

## D. Love That Cares

The ancient philosophers had one aim in life: to seek peace of mind -- serenity for the soul. In order to attain this, the pagans taught the utter necessity of two basic qualities: first, the necessity of self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency is the absolute independence of anything or anyone outside of one's self. They sought to find peace entirely within themselves. The second basic quality was a complete indifference to joy or sorrow, gladness or grief. The heart was to be insulated from all feelings and emotion. They sought this attitude of mind so that nothing would affect them or disturb their calm.

If this is the goal of life then it is easy to see that the great enemy of peace is love. LOVE IS THE GREAT DISTURBER. Epictetus insisted that men should never set their hearts on anyone or anything. He taught that a man must teach himself not to care.

In direct contrast to this, Christian love is caring. The pagan philosophers said, "Teach yourself not to care lest you be hurt." The Christian message says, "Teach yourself to care intensely for men even though it does hurt." God cared so much that it cost him His Son (Jno. 3:16). Paul writes, *"Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep"* (Rom. 12:15). This caring is obvious on every page of the New Testament. There is a high cost for loving. Jesus cared and it cost Him His life. The Good Samaritan cared and it cost him effort, time and money. The Apostle Paul loved and cared and in II Cor. 11 he describes the high cost of that love. He concludes the long list of sufferings with these words, *"Besides those things that are without there is that which presseth upon me daily anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is caused to stumble and I burn not?"* (II Cor. 11:28-29). Despite the high cost the way of love is still the happiest and best way. How thankful we are that God loved and cared for us.

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## E. Love Is the Badge of Identification for the Christian

Jesus told His disciples, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (Jno. 13:35). The Apostle John echoes the Master's words when he says, *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen"* (I Jno. 4:20).

Jesus further exhorts His disciples to *"Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:44-45). Love is a sure indication that one has passed from death into life. *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death"* (I Jno. 3:14). Love identifies the disciple as belonging to God, who is love.

## F. Love Is Eternal and Indestructable

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen, *"beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"* (I Cor. 13:7).

## G. The Challenge of Love

When man faces the fact that God loves him and has proved it in practical terms, he is faced with a challenge -- a decision. He cannot simply ignore it: he must either return this love or else reject it. Herein lies man's condemnation. When he spurns the love of God, he not only hurts God but shuts himself up to a loveless life away from God. *"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."* (Jude 21)

JOE YOUNG  
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## FROM THE SCRIPTURES ...

### EZEKIEL 3

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man,  
that the righteous sin not, and he doth not  
sin, he shall surely live, because he is  
warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

Dear Readers:

The company I work for has recently transferred me to the Mobile area. I realize this is part of God's will for me. Nevertheless, it is always difficult to pack up and move. The obvious question is: Will The Harvester continue to be published? The answer is, Yes! Of course, things will get hectic during this period of transition. So if any problems or delays should arise concerning this paper, I hope you will understand and be patient.

At this time I would like to give credit where credit is due. Many thanks go to Paul Cobb who has diligently printed every issue so far. He has done a wonderful job and has helped to improve the paper overall. Without his service, The Harvester could not have maintained its schedule. Last year I tried to give Paul the proper credit due him but he would have no part of it then, nor does he now, I'm sure. I would also like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed to The Harvester: in a financial sense, with your kind words of encouragement, with information on meetings, and with written articles. It is so edifying to read and share articles from brethren of different congregations. Such articles are still being solicited for this paper, of course. Just send them to my address in Birmingham.

Please continue to pray for us and for the work that The Harvester can accomplish. RAY

## AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matt. 23:27-28) In this passage Jesus severely criticizes the nature of the scribes and Pharisees. He doesn't beat around the bush. He names these so-called "religious leaders" exactly what they are: hypocrites!! What may come as a surprise is the fact that Jesus could call many of us by that same term: hypocrites!

We like to call ourselves "Christians". We brag about being members of the Lord's church. We insist we "know it all" and everybody else is "dead wrong". Indeed, we "*appear beautiful outward*" and "*righteous unto men*" but our actions show otherwise.

This is particularly true concerning our lack of attending the church services, i.e., the "*assembling of ourselves together*". Hebrews 10:25 specifically tells us NOT to forsake this assembling. Every time the church doors open, we should make our BEST effort to be there with our fellow brethren. Yet, how many of us would rather watch TV or go to a football game or be with our friends or stay at home than go to church? Is this how we "*seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*" (Matt. 6:33)?

Truly our actions speak louder than words. When we call ourselves by "*that worthy name*", but forsake the church which is the body of Christ, there is only one term to describe us: hypocrites!! Is this what we want to be? Of course not. Therefore, let us repent (change

our ways) and "cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also"(Matt. 23:26). Repentance has to start inside our hearts!

Let us not neglect the Lord's church as we have done in the past but strive for increased attendance. Let us do as the early disciples did: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."(Acts 2:42) When we do this, then we will be that proper "light of the world" and not as hypocrites.

RAY

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place &amp; Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
March 6-8 (F-Su)	Fairview Church Oxford, AL 7:00pm [Sun: 10:45am & 6:00pm.]	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
March 13-15 (F-Su)	Pleasant Grove Church near Alex City, AL 7:00pm [Sun: 10:30am & 6:00pm.]	Chris Melton (West Point, GA)
March 20-22	Second Avenue Church Opelika, AL	Bill Prince Jr. (Oxford, AL)
April 5-10 (Su-F)	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL 7:30 week nights	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
May 31- June 7	Athens Church Casey County, KY	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 14-20	Pleasant Grove near Alex City, AL	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
June 21-26	Godby Road Church Atlanta, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)