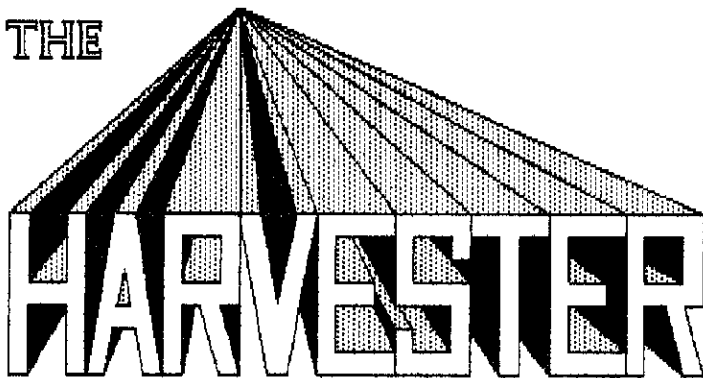


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

JULY 2001

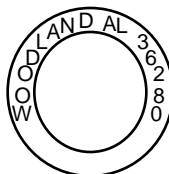
No. 187

SUFFERING PERSECUTIONS

How could this be? The disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee in a ship, the Master was asleep on a pillow and all of a sudden a great storm of wind arose, threatening to sink their boat (Mark 4:35-38). Did Jesus not care that they might perish? *"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."*

The little incident mentioned above should serve to remind us of one very

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important fact about persecutions: it is part of the Christian life. Note that the disciples in Mark 4 were followers of Christ, yet they still ran into a storm and contrary winds. Becoming a Christian does not guarantee smooth sailing, does it? In fact, the apostle Paul told Timothy very plainly, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (2 Tim. 3:12)

Sometimes we have the impression that a loving God will not allow his people to suffer a life of trouble and sorrow. But even Jesus, the Son of God, faced rough weather and a turbulent course. He was sorely tempted and tested by the devil in Matt. 4:1-11. In His final days in Jerusalem, Jesus was persecuted by the Jews and Romans alike. If Satan had access to persecute our Lord, then why wouldn't he likewise attack followers of Christ?

Believe it or not, there are a few good reasons why God allows Christians to be persecuted. Hardships will separate the good seed from the weak seed as illustrated in the Parable of the Sower. *"Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"* (Matt. 13:21).

Persecutions are also good in that they make us stronger and better, just as certain metals are melted and processed before becoming useful. *"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be*

tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" (1 Pet. 1:7). Recall how a piece of coal must be grinded, polished and cut several times before it becomes a priceless diamond.

Third, God uses troubles and trials in our life like a pruning knife so that we might bear much good fruit. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* (1 Cor. 10:13)

Knowing why God allows us to experience persecutions, we can now appreciate the attitude that the Bible encourages us to have toward persecutions. First, we are to rejoice in persecutions. *"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)

Jesus told His disciples to pray during tribulations, and even to pray for their persecutors. *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"* (Matt. 5:44). Would we be willing to do that?

It is significant for a Christian to be patient under persecution, too. *"Even*

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unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:" (1 Cor. 4:11,12). Persecutions are best dealt with through the avenue of much patience!

Finally, Christians are strongly exhorted to remain faithful in spite of whatever persecutions may arise. *"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)

With these few thoughts I pray we can better endure these perilous times (2 Tim. 3:1). As God's people, we will suffer persecution. It may come in many forms: ridicule, teasing, being snubbed or even physical punishment. Nevertheless, let us all display a godly attitude at all times. It will definitely have its reward in the end.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who is the Lord of the Sabbath?
2. After Abraham died, where did Isaac live?
3. How many believers met in an upper room for prayer after Jesus went to heaven?
4. Who prophesied that Bethlehem would produce the Messiah?
5. What did Moses do in order to keep the people from coming up to Mt. Sinai?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. According to Proverbs 8, when was wisdom appointed? FROM ETERNITY (Prov. 8:23)
2. What prophet did some people think Jesus was calling upon while He was on the cross? ELIJAH (Mark 15:35)
3. The woman that Jesus met at the well had had how many husbands? FIVE (John 4:18)
4. What must be removed from the silver before it can be used? THE DROSS (Prov. 25:4)
5. Paul says in 2 Corinthians that the letter of the covenant kills but what gives life? SPIRIT (2 Cor. 3:6)

“NOT UNDER BONDAGE”

1 Corinthians 7:15, *"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace."*

The clause in this verse which no doubt raises the question is, *"A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases."*

Some would explain this statement to mean that a believer in Christ, whose unbelieving spouse has departed from the marriage, is free and no longer bound to that marriage. To remove this verse from its proper context (its surrounding, related verses) might permit one to understand Paul's teaching to allow dissolving of such a marriage. A proper view of the matter under consideration, however, teaches just the opposite.

In verses 12 through 14 Paul discusses the marriage where one is a Christian and the other is not. He instructs the believer to not leave the unbeliever, for that relationship is recognized as a marriage even though one is an unbeliever. He explains that if this were not so, then the children to this marriage would be considered illegitimate. He continues in verse 16 to show that by remaining with the unbeliever, the Christian might be able to influence and convert the unbeliever.

Then Paul reasons that the unbeliever is not content and departs the marriage. He

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
June 29 - - July 1	Chapel Hill Church Pell City, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 29 - - July 1	Red Hill Church Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 8 - 13	Rainsville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 11 - 15	Fayetteville Rd Church Atlanta, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 15 - 20 (Su-Fr)	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL 7:00 PM	Ray McManus (Woodland, AL)
July 15 - 21	Ashlock Church near Celina, TN	Carley Conner (Allgood, TN)
July 22 - 27 (Su-Fr)	Napolean Church Woodland, AL 7:00 PM	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
July 22 - 27	Temple Hill Church Smithdale, MS	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 23 - 27	Becton, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

* * * * *

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Paul the Apostle