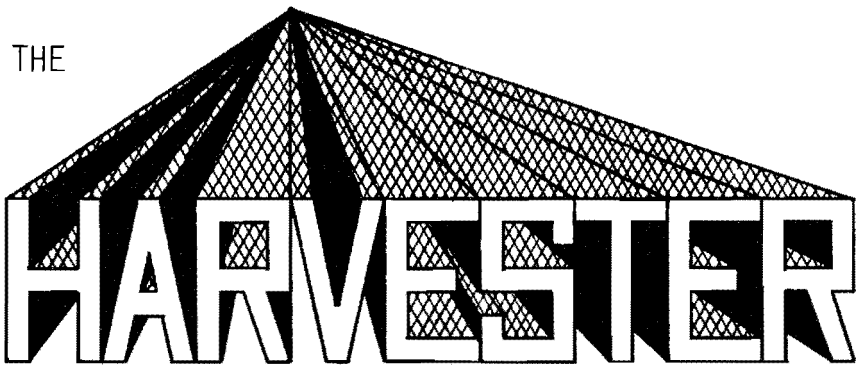


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*"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)*

December 1988

No. 036

## ABIDE IN CHRIST

I have always found it hard to understand why members of the body of Christ become unfaithful in their service to the Lord. They quit studying the Bible. They no longer heed God's commands nor fear his merciful warnings. These members stop altogether coming to church and associating with fellow saints. Can they not see how important it is to remain faithful? Have they been told of the beautiful benefits which results when one abides in Christ?

To be a Christian is a glorious feeling. There is nothing quite like the peace in the heart of one who has turned away from the world and now dwells in Christ. Although a Christian lives IN the world, he is not "of the world". He seeks

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*"those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"*(Col. 3:1).

When a "storm" approaches, the natural man worries about the physical things but the man who abides in Christ finds spiritual peace. Jesus consoled His disciples, *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*(John 16:33) Ever notice when members "forsake" or leave the church, they become worldly in nature? They take *"thought for the morrow"*(Matt. 6:34). This is what happened to a fellow worker of the apostle Paul. *"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world"*(2 Tim. 4:10). Demas decreased his love for Christ, thereby allowing an increase of love for the world. By abandoning Christ, we likewise give up our access to the peace He has promised. Isn't it sad to think of members who have already done so?

It is also beneficial to abide in Christ to avoid sin. *"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."*(1 John 3:6) This does not mean we will never sin again if we remain a faithful disciple. It means we will not be in the habit of practicing sin. We will not commit the same mistake over and over again. If we have truly "seen him" and if we really "know" our Lord, then we will not continue our sins.

Many years ago a popular commercial showed a man "kicking the habit" of smoking. In a sense, Christ helps us to "kick the habit" of sin when we abide in Him. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*(Phil. 4:13) It is through Him that all things are possible for us. But if we turn our back on our only source of strength, we are certain to fall from God's grace. To desert the "one fold" means to abandon our Lord and Saviour.

Without Christ it is impossible to bear spiritual fruits. *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*(John 15:4-5) This is a very important message that was given to the disciples by Christ. The key to the whole passage is "ABIDE IN ME". Most people prefer to think that first Christ will reside in them. Only then will they make the commitment to dwell in Him. But notice carefully the order of the words, *"Abide in me, and I in you"*. We must make the initial move! Many times we like to sing: "Abide with me! fast falls the eventide, The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide!" The Lord will abide with us, but only after we abide in Him! Too often people leave the church because they cannot find the Lord in their lives. The truth is, they did not put their own lives in the Lord first and thus, were not able to bear spiritual fruits.

The answer to our prayers can also be affected by our relationship to Christ. God will not answer the prayers of a sinner (John 9:31) but he will grant the request of one who abides in His Son. *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."*(John 15:7) When a hand is cut off from our physical body, it loses the benefits of the circulation of the blood. Similarly, when a member leaves the body of Christ, that member is weakened. Imagine living in today's society without the benefits of prayer. How hopeless and how lonely the soul becomes! Can we afford then to depart from the Almighty God?

Perhaps the most significant reason to remain faithful in Christ is because He WILL come again

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and we must be prepared to meet Him. *"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."*(1 John 2:28) What a terrible judgment those who are no longer *"in Christ"* will face! They will be cast into a *"furnace of fire"* along with the ones who have never obeyed the Gospel (Matthew 13:41-42 and 2 Thess. 1:7-9). But the few who abide in Christ at the time of His appearing will be confident. They know their eternal reward will be in heaven. *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*(2 Tim. 4:8)

To be a member of the Lord's church but an unfaithful one is a serious disadvantage. Such a disciple lacks true peace, habitually sins, can not bear spiritual fruits, has unanswered prayers, and will be ashamed at the second coming of Christ. One apostle described it best in 2 Peter 2:20-22. *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb,*

*The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*" If we know of one in this condition, please let us warn him. Tell him of the wonderful life that can be enjoyed when one abides in Christ!

RAY McMANUS

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who is buried under the great oak tree in Jabesh?
2. What two foods did the ravens feed Elijah during the drought?
3. How many swords did the disciples have with them when they left the upper room?
4. According to John 5, in whom did the people set their hope?
5. How many Psalms did Moses write?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Did anyone go with Saul when he consulted the medium of Endor? YES, 2 MEN (1 Sam. 28:8)
2. Where did Rahab tell the spies to go for three days until the pursuers gave up looking for them? THE MOUNTAINS (Josh. 2:16)
3. With what attitude should you lend? WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING BACK (Lk. 6:35)
4. According to Zephaniah, what kind of bird will inhabit the desolated Nineveh? THE CORMORANT (Zeph. 2:13,14)
5. In which New Testament book does the name "Jesus" not appear? III John

## AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

This year "Christmas" falls on a Sunday, the first day of the week when Christians gather together to break bread (Acts 20:7). I am sure that most of our church buildings will witness a dramatic increase in attendance on that particular morning. Besides the visitors, some of the people who arrive may even be members of the church whom we have not seen in quite a while. This would not be anything unexpected.

The following Sunday will be New Year's Day and again, I speculate there will be an increase at most of our congregations, although not as near the amount as the previous week's service. Some who attend this time will probably be working on a new resolution: go to church more often than last year. But by the time February rolls around, only those few faithful members will again be occupying the pews of the church building. *"Why is the house of the Lord forsaken?"*, Nehemiah asked in Neh. 13:11 and it is still a question that is pertinent for today.

The manner of some will be to answer this question with a long list of "legitimate reasons" for missing the services. Yet most of the answers we hear are not really reasons, but excuses! They attempt to justify their mistakes knowing full well that they are in error.

"I didn't have enough time to go last week". It is funny how we can schedule certain events months ahead of time and still keep the appointment. If it is an important date to us, we are sure to see that nothing hinders us from making that date. We always have time to go to the places and to do the things we really want. Well, we know exactly when the church meets in our area. Why not mark the calendar if we have



## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place &amp; Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Dec. 1-4	Lamar, Colorado	Harry Cobb (Birmingham, AL)
Dec. 9-11	Cloud Nine Church Sierra Vista, AZ	Harry Cobb (Birmingham, AL)
Dec. 31 (Sat.)	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS 7:00pm to midnight	New Years Eve get - together and singing

Now is a good time to start thinking about next year's get-together. Brethren from throughout the U.S. are already planning to take their vacation in Kentucky. The tentative dates are June 19-23. There will be plenty of fellowship and approximately 12 different speakers giving brief talks on the theme of the Restoration Movement. The highlight of the week will include visits to the Cane Ridge Meeting House (1804) in Paris, KY; the Ashlock church (1805); and the Old Mulkey Meeting House (1809) in Tompkinsville, KY. Look for more details in future announcements and make plans to join us.

!!

[Editor's Note: This issue completes our third year of publishing THE HARVESTER. It has been so successful that we can only give God all the praise and credit. Several names were added to our mailing list, bringing our current total to 810. This includes 26 different states!

It is time again to give special thanks to those who contributed articles this year. They are: John Barris, Max Gaskins, Marty Livingston, Zachary Michini, and Tony Whiddon. Their help was greatly appreciated.]