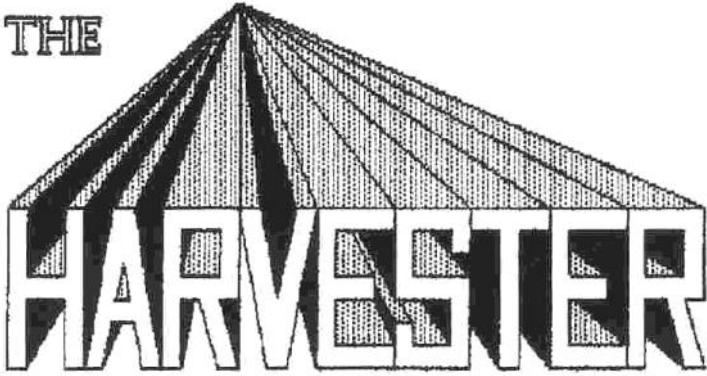


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*“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)*

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March 2020

No. 411

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## ITCHING EARS

When you have an itch, you want to scratch it. You have learned that scratching an itch usually relieves the itchy sensation. The apostle Paul wrote about itching ears in 2 Timothy 4:2-4,

*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall*

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*turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 4:2-4)*

There will be people with itching ears – ears that want to be “scratched” with what they want to hear so that their hearts will be pleased and satisfied. People will go after teachers that tell them things that are pleasing to their ears, but the things they tell them are not sound doctrine.

It seems that if you search, you will find someone who will preach and teach almost any doctrine. Most people want to be rich and be blessed financially. There are those who preach a “prosperity gospel.” The prosperity gospel is a belief by some that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one’s material wealth. The prosperity gospel views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, He will deliver security and prosperity (Wikipedia). To me, this sounds like an itching ear situation. People want to be told that God will give them financial blessings and physical well-being. Is it any wonder that there are large churches with rich leaders that teach this doctrine? It is not my purpose here to refute this doctrine, but suffice it to say that God does want to bless you, but the blessings are primarily spiritual.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (Eph. 1:3)*

Another false doctrine is that Jesus accepts you in your continued sexual immorality. There are those who teach that you can continue as a homosexual or as an adulterer or a fornicator and God will accept you. Any marital situation is alright; any lifestyle is acceptable. Again, this sounds to me like an itching ear problem. People want to be told that they can continue in their sexual immorality. Is it any wonder that there are large churches that follow these doctrines? But God hates sexual immorality.

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)*

The examples given above are just a small sample of unsound doctrines that people with itching ears will follow. The problem is that many people do not have a love of the truth. The apostle Paul wrote about some who didn't love the truth.

*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes. 2:9-12)*

When one really loves the truth, he will seek for the truth and accept it into his life regardless of the consequences. He values the truth above any pleasure falsehood might provide. When one does not love the truth, God will send a strong delusion that he should believe a lie. When he searches, he will find someone who will tell him what he wants to hear.

The approach to follow is what the apostle Paul taught. *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).*

Proclaim the truth. Be ready at all times to stand up for the truth. Seek to convince others of the truth. Rebuke those who reject the truth. Exhort those who have the truth to remain steadfast in the truth. Have patience and be longsuffering. Do not give up your stand for the truth or your attempts to influence others to accept and follow the truth.

The truth is very important. *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). He stated in John 18:37b,

*To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

Jesus brought the truth to the world. The writers of the New Testament wrote the truth. It is the truth that sets you free.

*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* (John 8:31-32)

My encouragement to you is to love the truth. Seek the truth and when you find it, hold on to it and follow it. Determine in your heart to never have itching ears to be turned away from the truth.

ED ANDERSON  
Sierra Vista, AZ

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Two long-time congregations have ceased meeting recently. In Alabama, the West Gadsden Church of Christ in Gadsden no longer meets there due to safety concerns. In Tennessee, the Fourth Avenue Church of Christ in Cookeville no longer meets there due to building damage. The members of Fourth Avenue have released an announcement with more information which can be read by scanning the QR code below with your smartphone's camera.

The members of each of these congregations are now meeting with other nearby congregations. Please pray for them, as it is not easy to leave a place that has been there for generations.



## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What did God create on the fifth day?
2. What was Samson's offer of reward if the Philistines could solve his riddle?
3. How old was Josiah when he became king of Judah?
4. From which minor prophet is Jesus quoting when he says, "*I am come to set...the daughter against her mother*"?
5. In a parable told by Jesus, two men went up to the temple to pray, a Pharisee and who else?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...

And remember last month's questions?

1. What does the name Abraham mean?  
FATHER OF MANY NATIONS (Gen. 17:5)
2. Israel split into two kingdoms after the reign of King Solomon, with Israel in the north, but what was the name of the southern kingdom?  
JUDAH (1 Ki. 11:31-36; 12:20-21)
3. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream what did the different metals of the statue represent?  
KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD (Dan. 2:37-44)
4. Until when did Jesus remain in Egypt with his parents, when he was a baby?  
UNTIL THE DEATH OF HEROD THE GREAT (Mat. 2:15)
5. What was the first temptation of Christ?  
TO TURN A STONE INTO BREAD (Mat. 4:3)

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, address changes and all correspondence to:

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## YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

During his first defense at Rome, Paul experienced a somewhat lonely feeling. There he stood before Caesar's court and now it seemed that all his companions had deserted him. *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge"* (2 Tim. 4:16).

Where had everybody gone and why? Perhaps some were away on business but others had fled for fear. Nonetheless, bound in chains, the prisoner Paul stood his ground. He had preached the Truth, *"Christ and Him crucified"* (1 Cor. 2:2). He was *"not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16). Why should he be frightened if the whole world was after him? Yet, he was not as lonely as it appeared. Paul assured Timothy,

*Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.* (2 Tim. 4:17)

There will be times when we likewise preach the Word of God and it will not be favorably received by the world. Close friends will desert us, refusing to be associated with "that freak." The same thing happened to Jesus when He was arrested (Mat. 26:56). And just as Elijah felt he was the only prophet of God left (1 Ki. 19:10), there are also congregations of the Lord in remote areas feeling the same loneliness. They have studied the Bible, followed the pattern, and stood up for the Truth while everyone else runs rampant in sin. *"I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top"* (Psa. 102:7). Does that verse describe our current condition? Are we feeling alone because, in our efforts to follow the New Testament pattern, we are different and 'peculiar'?

Perhaps then, to avoid the loneliness, should we forsake the scriptural teachings and join the multitudes and do "what eve-

ryone else is doing?” No! Continue in the Truth and stand firm in the faith. We are not really alone in this world. Even when all others leave us, our Father constantly remains by our side. Jesus, in His darkest hour, had this same blessed assurance.

*Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. (John 16:32)*

Therefore, let us always be encouraged to “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*” (2 Tim 4:2) because the Lord will “*will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*” (Heb. 13:5b).

RAY MCMANUS

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## NEVER ALONE

*Verse 1:* I’ve seen the lightning flashing,  
And heard the thunder roll,  
I’ve felt sin’s breakers dashing,  
Trying to conquer my soul;  
I’ve heard the voice of Jesus  
Telling me still to fight on:  
He promised never to leave me,  
Never to leave me alone.

*Refrain:* No, never alone,  
No, never alone -  
He promised never to leave me,  
Never to leave me alone;  
No, never alone,  
No, never alone -  
He promised never to leave me,  
Never to leave me alone.

*Verse 2:* The world’s fierce winds are blowing -  
Temptation’s sharp and keen;

## GOSPEL MEETINGS

| DATES            | PLACE                              | SPEAKER                         |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| March<br>20 - 22 | Gilstrap<br>Gilstrap, KY           | Joe Hill<br>(Hagerhill, KY)     |
| March<br>27 - 29 | Willow Oaks<br>Russell Springs, KY | J.D. McDonald<br>(Woodbury, TN) |
| March<br>27 - 29 | Verona<br>Verona, KY               | Joe Hill<br>(Hagerhill, KY)     |

*(cont. from pg. 7)*

I have a peace in knowing  
My Savior stands between;  
He stands to shield me from danger  
When all my friends are gone:  
He promised never to leave me,  
Never to leave me alone. [*Refrain*]

*Verse 3:* When in affliction's valley  
I tread the road of care,  
My Savior helps me to carry  
My cross so heavy to bear;  
Though all around me is darkness  
And earthly joys are flown,  
My Savior whispers His promise:  
Never to leave me alone. [*Refrain*]

*Verse 4:* He died on Calv'ry's mountain,  
For me they pierced His side,  
For me He opened that fountain,  
The crimson, cleansing tide;  
For me He's waiting in glory,  
Upon His heavenly throne:  
He promised never to leave me,  
Never to leave me alone. [*Refrain*]

ANONYMOUS  
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