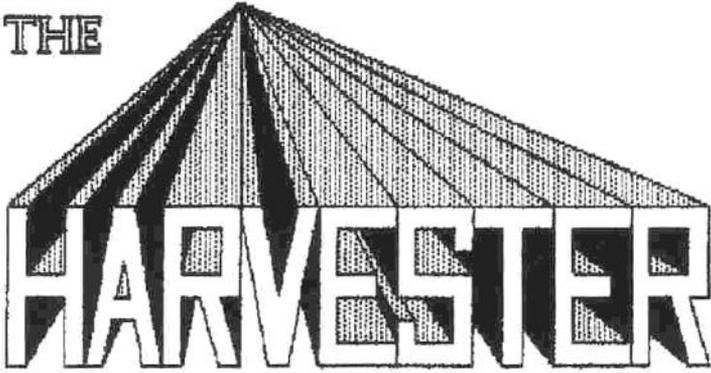


THE



*“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)*

---

May 2021

No. 425

---

## PEACE – WHAT THE CHURCH CAN MEAN TO YOU (PART II)

[Editor’s note: This is part two of an article that was adapted from a sermon given by Bro. Kent Dickinson in 1982.]

Salvation gives peace of mind and is found only through reconciliation with God.

*For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in*

---

THE HARVESTER  
141 County Road 474  
Woodland, AL 36280  
**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



*himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (Eph. 2:14-16)*

There are several things that should be clear to the honest and sincere searcher in that scripture. First, Jesus Christ is our peace. There is no peace to be obtained without Him. There is no peace to be gained outside of Him. He has made it possible for man to be reconciled unto God by the means of His cross. But the place where the reconciliation is achieved is in the one body. Earlier in the letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul has explained that the body referred to here is the Church of the Lord (Eph. 1:22-23). We can see then that man is reconciled unto God in the body, the body is the church, therefore, man is reconciled unto God in the church. For us to gain the peace for which we search, we must be reconciled unto God, and this reconciliation takes place only in the church. The church can mean that you can be reconciled unto God bringing greater peace and joy into your life.

A person who is reconciled unto God is a receiver of salvation. As we have already discussed, this reconciliation is in the church. Salvation, therefore, is in the church. The church is made up of those who are saved from their past sins. Salvation does not come prior to reconciliation; it comes as a result of reconciliation. Paul wrote:

*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Eph. 1:7)*

The blood of Christ, poured out upon the cross, has made it possible for us to be redeemed and saved. This salvation includes the forgiveness of our sins. The blood of Christ purchased the church. We must be in the church to be saved.

*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. (Eph. 5:23)*

Jesus is the Savior. He is the Savior of the body. The body is church. Jesus, therefore, is the Savior of the church. The saved are in the church. You cannot be saved without the Savior. You will find that God's offer of salvation to you is to be found in Christ, in the church. This should encourage everyone who understands his need of salvation to do that which God has ordained. It must be done in order to become a member of the church set forth in the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

Another statement of truth that may help us to a better understanding of this matter is found in these verses from Romans.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Rom. 8:14-17)*

Those who are in the church are the children of God. We have obeyed the same form of doctrine, we follow the one and only Christ. We cling to the same word of truth. We live under the same name. We reside in the same house, the "house of God." We serve the one and only Father. We have in our hearts the same hope. We are strengthened by the same faith. What a grand and glorious destiny awaits us! Together, the people of

NOTICE: Is your congregation having a Gospel Meeting this summer? To have it announced in this paper, please send all information to [theharvesteronline@gmail.com](mailto:theharvesteronline@gmail.com) as soon as possible. We will need the announcement by the first Sunday of the month before your Meeting to make the printing deadline. If a Meeting does not make the printing deadline, we can still announce it on The Harvester website calendar and on Facebook.

the church will walk the golden street of that eternal, celestial city of God. Forever.

The church means something to me and the church can mean something to you!

KENT DICKINSON  
(Deceased)

---

## “HEAR THOU PLAINLY, I AM A CHRISTIAN”

[Editor’s note: With Christianity becoming increasingly unpopular in today’s society, this reprint is even more relevant than when written by Brother Thomas in 1999. Brother Dwight and Sister Jeanette Thomas were true blessings to those of us who knew them during their sojourn with the congregations in east Alabama and west Georgia. Their good works and love of fellowship will long be remembered by those of us who knew them. Brother Thomas passed from this life in 2012. Sister Jeanette passed away on February 20, 2021. ]

In our nation today, Christians have the freedom to worship as they please. We are able to assemble when we choose, to worship God, to sing His praises, to offer our prayers of thanksgiving and observe the Lord’s Supper. We are able to carry the banner high, declaring to the world that we are Christians. We can do all of these things without fear of persecution or molestation.

However, this freedom did not exist for the early Christians. Their love of God and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was a source of great worldly pain, suffering and even death to them. Both Jews and Gentiles alike persecuted the early Christians. Paul is an example of a Christian who frequently suffered at the hands of those who did not believe in Christ. *“Of the Jews five times received forty stripes save one.*

*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned*" (2 Cor. 11:24-25). In the later years, the Christians did not even have the freedom which Paul enjoyed. Rather, they knew with certainty, that if they were identified as a Christian their fate would be punishment and death. But they continued strong in their faith, secure in the knowledge, that Jesus Christ had suffered and died for them that they might have everlasting life.

Despite the threat of bodily harm and death, there were many everyday people, who boldly lived their lives as Christians declaring Jesus Christ as their Savior. One such Christian was a man named Polycarp. There is a considerable amount of information available concerning Polycarp through his writings as well as the writings of others. Polycarp's year of birth is uncertain but it was early in the last half of the first century. He lived to become an old man and died approximately 155 A. D.

It was a joy to read about Polycarp, to learn about the strength of his faith, to learn about the great love which he had for Jesus Christ. We can be certain about his love of Christ and his faith, because you see, Polycarp not only lived for Christ, he died for Christ. He allowed himself to be put to death rather than denounce his Lord and Savior. It will not be possible, in this article, to discuss the life and writings of Polycarp; instead, we will look at the manner in which he died for Christ. The events surrounding his death were recorded in a letter written by the Church at Smyrna. The details were based on eye witness accounts of his death.

Both Jew and Gentile alike were calling for the death of the Christian Polycarp. To the Romans, Polycarp was an atheist because he did not believe that Caesar was a God, instead served only Christ. The search for Polycarp ended when he was located by the Roman guard. Every action taken and every word spoken by Polycarp from the time of his capture until his death demonstrated his great love of God and of Jesus his Lord. Again, the age of Polycarp at his death is uncertain but it is written that he served Jesus Christ for 86 years, so we know

that he was a very old man at the time of his capture and subsequent death.

His first action upon being captured was to prepare food and drink for the Roman guard. He then asked permission to pray, which was granted. The written account states:

“He stood up and prayed, being so full of the grace of God, that for two hours he could not hold his peace, and those that heard were amazed, and many repented that they had come against such a venerable old man.”

History does not tell us the contents of his prayer. However, based on his subsequent actions and words, I feel certain he did not pray that his life would be spared or that he would be delivered from the hands of those who hated the name Jesus Christ and wanted the death of those that loved Him.

At the completion of his prayer, Polycarp was taken to appear before the proconsul. Upon his appearance at the stadium where Christians were put to death, a great roar went up from the crowd when they heard that Polycarp had been captured and that they would get to witness the death of this Christian. However, when the proconsul saw that Polycarp was a man well advanced in years and no threat to anyone, he offered three times to spare his life if he would renounce Jesus Christ and acknowledge Caesar as his lord. Each time Polycarp chose Jesus Christ over life. Each time he refused in such a way that left no doubt as where his love and his loyalty lay.

The proconsul, the first time, offered to spare his life if Polycarp would “swear by the genius of Caesar and say away with the atheists” (meaning those who did not believe Caesar was a God). Polycarp waved his arm toward the assembled crowd and toward the proconsul and said “Away with the atheist.” Can’t you just imagine the look of dismay on the proconsul’s face? He had offered Polycarp his life and in turn had been called an atheist. Certainly, it was not what he expected, but then Polycarp was plainly filled with a love of God and of Jesus

Christ, who had died for him. Polycarp told the proconsul “fourscore and six years have I been His servant and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me.” What a wonderful response for a Christian to be able to make as his life on earth is about to end.

Again, the proconsul wanted him to swear by the genius of Caesar. Polycarp, with his worldly life hanging on his response, gave an answer which causes a catch in my throat each time I read it:

“If thou supposes vainly that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as thou sayest, and feignest that thou are ignorant of who I am, HEAR THOU PLAINLY, I AM A CHRISTIAN.”

He wanted the proconsul to know, without question, that he loved God, he loved Jesus Christ, he would willingly die rather than renounce them. What a wonderful example that should be for us today. An example which demonstrates that our love of God, the Father and Jesus, the Son should be the most powerful force in our lives and in the world. What a difference we could make for Christ.

The third time, the proconsul threatened Polycarp with being thrown to wild beasts or to cause him to be consumed by fire if he did not repent and acknowledge the genius of Caesar. His response was “Thou threatenest with fire which burneth for a season and after a little while is quenched: for thou are ignorant of the fire of the future judgment and eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why delayest thou, come, do what thou wilt”.

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:

The Harvester

141 County Road 474 \* Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221\* Email: [theharvesteronline@gmail.com](mailto:theharvesteronline@gmail.com)

Web Page: [www.churches-of-christ.org](http://www.churches-of-christ.org)

After refusing for the third time to deny Christ, Polycarp was bound to a stake, the fire was lit, he was stabbed with a dagger and he died, secure in his love of God and of Jesus Christ. Before he died, Polycarp offered up a final prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer of praise, glorifying God with his final words. What a truly sweet savor it must have been to God and to Jesus Christ.

Polycarp died for his love of Jesus Christ. As Christians, shouldn't we live, in such a manner that our actions, our words, and our deeds proclaim to the world "HEAR THOU PLAINLY, I AM A CHRISTIAN."

DWIGHT THOMAS

Reprinted from *The Harvester*, August 2012

Resource Material:

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS – J. B. Lightfoot & J. H. Hammer.

EARLY CHRISTIANS SPEAK – Everett Ferguson.

WILL THE REAL HERETICS PLEASE STAND UP– David W. Bercot.

(Please note: This article originally printed in TOWARD THE MARK, Volume 6, #1, January – March 1999 Editor: T. C. E.)

---

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who deceived Jacob by giving Leah as a wife instead of Rachel?
2. What was the name of Ruth's second husband?
3. Complete this common phrase of thanksgiving found in the Bible: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his \_\_\_\_\_ endureth for ever."
4. What did Jesus send disciples to fetch on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem?
5. What does James say we should say when we make our future plans?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...