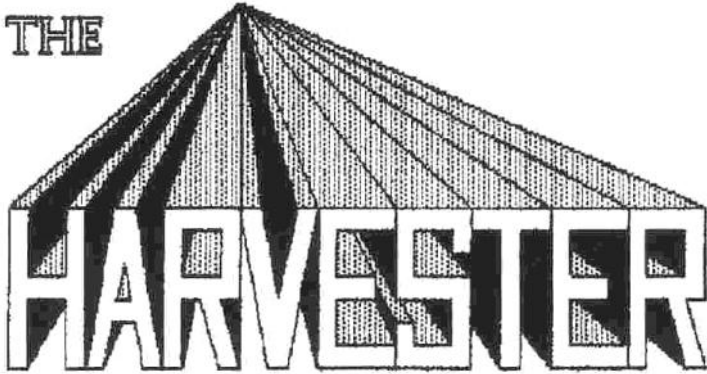




"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

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No. 489

SECRET CHRISTIANS: THE COST OF COMPROMISE WITH THE WORLD

In the religious world today, a troubling trend has quietly emerged within the pews. There are many who claim to wear the name of Christ, yet they deliberately conceal their identity from the world around them. They are "secret Christians." While they may assemble with the saints on the first day of the week, their faith remains a secret from Monday through Saturday. Why do some Christians hide their faith? The answer is as old as the New Testament itself: it is

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the fear of persecution, the craving for human approval, and a failure to count the cost of true discipleship.

We must understand that the church and the world are fundamentally opposed to one another. The world operates on the principles of sin and selfishness, while the Christian is called to a standard of absolute holiness. When a child of God lives faithfully, that lifestyle serves as a reproof to the darkness around them.

The scriptures tell us plainly that the world will hate the truth. In John 15:18-20, our Lord Jesus Christ gave a sobering warning to His disciples:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Jesus made it clear that because we are called out of the world, the world will naturally oppose us.

This is not a new phenomenon. The apostle John reminds us of the historical root of this hatred in 1 John 3:11-15. He points back to Cain, who murdered his brother Abel. “*And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil,*

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and his brother's righteous." John then warns the brethren, *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."* When Christians hide their faith, they are often trying to escape this inevitable spiritual friction. They choose spiritual anonymity rather than bearing the reproach of Christ.

A primary reason many choose to hide their lamp under a bushel is the desire to be well-liked by society. Human nature craves acceptance, but the gospel demands total allegiance to God, regardless of public opinion.

The apostle Paul addressed this directly in his letter to the churches of Galatia. In Galatians 1:10, he asks a penetrating question: *"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."* Paul understood that you cannot serve two masters. You cannot faithfully live the gospel while trying to maintain the applause of a dying world. Furthermore, in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, he emphasizes that our speech and conduct must be aimed *"not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."*

Jesus delivered a terrifying indictment against those who prioritize popularity over principles. In Luke 6:26, He declared, *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."* If the world is completely comfortable with us, it is highly likely that we have compromised our conviction. Hiding our Christianity to maintain social standing or job security is a direct betrayal of the cross.

We also see that fear of consequences drives people into spiritual hiding. We find a vivid example of this in the Gospel of John. In John 9:19-28, after Jesus healed a man born blind, the Pharisees questioned the man's parents. Rather than boldly testifying to the miraculous power of Christ, the parents deflected, saying, *"He is of age; ask him."* Why did

they do this? The Holy Spirit records the reason in verses 22 and 23:

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

For these parents, confessing Christ meant social ostracization, financial ruin, and being cut off from their community. Today, the fear may not be the synagogue, but it is the fear of being canceled, mocked, or isolated at school or in the workplace.

However, the New Testament pattern commands us to stand firm. The apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:12-16 that “*the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers.*” He admonishes us,

And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Brethren, we cannot be closet Christians and remain pleasing to God. Jesus stated unequivocally that “*whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*” (Mat. 10:33) Hiding our faith may buy us temporary peace, temporary friendships, and temporary comfort in this life, but it comes at the cost of our eternal salvation. Let us resolve to stand up, speak up, and live out the gospel openly, remembering that it is better to be hated by the world and approved by God, than to be loved by the world and lost for eternity.

Adapted from a lesson by GERALD CARTER
Deceased

BEWARE OF WORLDLINESS

2 Tim. 2:4 -- *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

1 Pet. 2:11 -- *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*

1 Pet. 1:13-15 -- *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*

Eph. 4:17 -- *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

1 John 2:15-17 -- *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

2 Pet. 2:12-15 -- *But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling un-*

stable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

Col. 3:2 -- *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Rom. 12:2 -- *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Jas. 4:4 -- *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Tit. 2:12 -- *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*

Jude 1:17-19 -- *But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

1 Tim. 6:7-10 -- *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
abide in Him always, and feed on His word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
 spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
 By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
 thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide,
and run not before Him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,
and, looking to Jesus, still trust in His word.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
each thought and each motive beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

WILLIAM D. LONGSTAFF
(ca. 1882)

Part-time Faith, Like Part-time Jobs, Cannot Fully Support You

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What happened to Lot's wife?
2. Where did the division of languages begin?
3. How long was Solomon king over Israel?
4. In the Sermon on the Mount, what did Jesus say would happen to the meek?
5. Into what did Jesus say the merchants had turned his house of prayer?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. Where did Stephen see Jesus standing? AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD (Acts 7:55)
2. Which disciple did not believe Jesus was alive? THOMAS (John 20:24-25)
3. Where did they sacrifice the thousands of oxen and sheep on the day of the dedication of Solomon's temple? THE MIDDLE OF THE COURT BEFORE THE TEMPLE (1 Kings 8:63-64)
4. Who was Solomon's mother? BATHSHEBA (2 Sam. 12:24)
5. What food was Samson not allowed to eat? GRAPES (Jud. 13:5, 14, 24; Num. 6:2-3)

HOW BEAUTIFUL HEAVEN MUST BE

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

(1 Cor. 2:9)