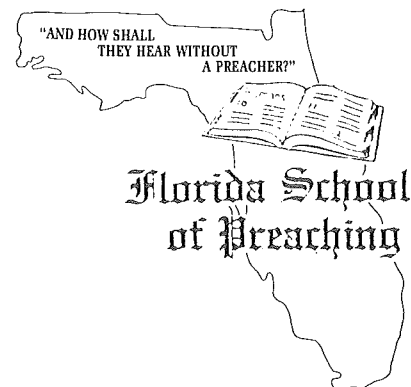


THE HARVESTERS



VOLUME XI

SEPTEMBER 1990

NUMBER 2

LET THESE FIRST BE PROVED

By
Wayne Coats

Almighty God knew exactly what man needed when the inspired word was revealed. A very timely piece in that divine record states, "And let these also first be **PROVED**; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" [All emphasis in the original article unless otherwise indicated, editor.] (I Timothy 3:10). To prove signifies to try and examine. Thus Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; **PROVE your own selves . . .**" (II Corinthians 13:5).

In writing to the church at Rome, Paul said, ". . . for we have before **PROVED both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin'** (Romans 3:9). These brethren were to, ". . . **PROVE what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God**" (Romans 12:2).

It should be obvious that at least some of the brethren in Corinth love the Lord, but nonetheless, Paul instructed them to give liberally, ". . . to **PROVE the sincerity of your love**" (II Corinthians 8:8).

Surely they could contend that they loved the Lord and would anyone desire proof? Our Lord required proof. Some of those in Corinth

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Tim. 2:20-21).

questioned the credentials of Paul. He said, ". . . ye seek a **proof of Christ speaking in me . . .**" (II Corinthians 13:3). Well, of course, Paul gave them plenty of proof: in fact, more than some of them wanted.

PROOF NEEDED TODAY

There has been no time in the history of the Lord's people

when proof and proving people are needed more. The libertines can wail all they please, but there are some of us who continue to read and respect the word of my God. Indeed we desire proof.

We live in lascivious, loose and wanderlust times. Some elders, preachers, and congregations are almost frenetic in the efforts to pad the church rolls. Anything that looks like a human being will be "taken in," excused and used. Church members can commit every sin from adultery to murder—and half-baked, ungodly brethren and sisters will extend to them the right hand of fellowship and the left of hand of license. Someone says, "When a brother repents and makes a confession, we must forgive him." That is absolutely correct—and for 45 years I have labored hard in teaching what the Bible says along that line. Indeed we must forgive the erring—but does that mean that an erring brother is to be placed immediately before the church in a place of public

leadership? Must this be done in order for me to be forgiving?

EXAMPLES OF SOME NEEDING TO BE PROVED

An elder left his wife and family to be with an immoral member of the church. Eventually he came back and confessed his sin. He said he had repented. Question! Should he start serving as an elder the next Lord's Day? Can we truly forgive him, yet refuse to accede to his wishes to be a shepherd? I would refuse to submit to this tomfoolery.

A Sodomite had been teaching a class of young boys in Sunday school, and it became known that he had molested two of the students. He was indicted, tried and sentenced to prison, but he came back to services before he began the prison term. He made a confession before the church and behold, the preacher and some others got him to go in and teach the boys' class. Everyone needed to be quiet because the Sodomite confessed his sins, and if we were loving we would not rock the boat.

A gospel preacher ran away with the wife of a deacon. They lived together for some time, but the woman eventually kicked the old boy out and he came back whimpering and whining to the brethren. Oh, he was so penitent. Rivers of waters rolled from his cheeks as he confessed. Someone asserted in somber tones, "Brother Amnon has confessed, so now forgive him and call him up to the pulpit to preach." I hereby declare to the whole world that if was in that church building, there would immediately be one empty seat. You say, "but you are judging." Certainly, I'm judging—and I hereby challenge one and all to

get the Book and prove that judging is sinful and wrong. Please read John 7:24 and then let's get busy and do what the text says—"Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

One of the most damnable, despicable, destructive, soul-destroying and costly practices known to any age, is the trafficking and use of narcotics. As a former Emergency Medical Technician I witnessed first-hand the horrors connected with drugs. Young lives were blasted, brains were destroyed, death stalked and subdued. Homes were shattered, hearts were broken, tears were shed, lonely vigils were spent beside hospital beds by parents, brothers, sisters and others with the final trek being made to a newly-made grave. Yes, I've seen this and more. Have you? Maybe you have never worked on an emergency ambulance as an E.M.T. You perchance have not spent a training period in Nashville General Hospital, and it's unlikely that you have served as a funeral director when some young person has died due to drugs. Well, I have! And my God spare you the trauma and heartache which I have seen.

Some dope-pushing brother becomes involved in drugs and God alone knows the hurt, harm and hell-bound souls which have resulted. The dope handler gets caught, indicted and sentenced. He repents and confesses. (Did not Judas Iscariot do the same—Matthew 24:3 [sic, Matt. 27:3-4])? Someone declares, "We need to let brother Psalms lead the singing of our hymns." I say we need to let brother Psalms *prove* that he has genuinely repented. But you say,

"How do you know that brother Psalms has not repented?" Aha! How do you really and truly know that he has? You want me to take the word of a fellow who has been lower than a viper? I prefer to see some real evidence, some fruit.

JOHN DEMANDED FRUIT

When John the Baptist was approached by those who wanted to join his crowd, he plainly said, "**Bring forth therefore fruits meet** (answerable to amendment of life) **for repentance**" (Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8). John demanded fruits which would absolutely show an amended life. Brethren, is this wrong? Can we not forgive erring brothers, and yet at the same time demand, yes, even require, that they show by their fruits that their lives have changed? I believe I know what the Spirit of Christ is, and I trust that I may truly imbibe this Spirit (Romans 8:9). This does not mean nor imply that I must be completely blind to sin, or does it?

When we study the text given at the beginning of this lesson, we note that men would have to be proven before they could later serve as deacons. How are men proven? The elders are to, ". . . **have a good report of them which are without . . .**

The Harvesters

Published Monthly by the Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue, Lakeland, Florida 33803
(813) 683-4043

Editor: Jackie Stearsman Associate Editor: Clifford Newell, Jr.

Board of Directors

B. C. Carr, President	Glenn Lee
Paul Thornhill, Vice President	Wallace Maxwell
J. H. Blackman, Jr., Secretary	James Medlin
E. Robert McAnally, Treasurer	Gordon Methvin
Maurice Davis	Willis Pack
Paul W. Eubanks	Dale Spung
Kenneth W. Franklin	Jackie Stearsman
George K. French	Gene Stilwell

TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

LIKEWISE (caps mine, w.c.) **must the deacons be . . . and let these first also be PROVED . . . being found blameless.**" Does God require elders and deacons to be demonstrate a blameless life before they begin their public service? The Book so declares! I contend that the rest of us also must be proven before we try to occupy the chief seats in the synagogue.

There is not a farmer in Tennessee with so little sense as to buy a yoke of oxen without first going to "**prove them**" (Luke 14:19). I do not plow oxen, but if I did I would want the animals to know "gee" from "haw." I'm convinced that a large segment of by brethren haven't learned this. The point is that they are apt to take off in any direction, obvious to what the word of God teaches.

Our blessed Lord taught a lesson about the son who would not work, but later he repented and went out to the vineyard (Matthew 21:29). Would it not seem that after he repented, his life demonstrated a change of mind and conduct? Did he not truly prove himself? At least, he didn't run in any try to be the foreman!

When Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, he had to deal with a serious problem. His first letter really disturbed the church, but it did much good. The members repented, and in the second letter Paul commended the brethren by saying, ". . . **what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves . . . In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter**" (II Corinthians 7:11). Could anyone ask more—or LESS? We believe this

is the desire of sound and godly brothers and sisters in the family of God today.

There is no question at all that good men were needed to preach and teach in carrying out the great commission. After his conversion, Saul of Tarsus became a great missionary. Often-times there were faithful brethren who would accompany Paul on his journeys. John Mark helped in the work at Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis and Paphos, but when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Perga, John left them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:5; 13:13). John escaped the persecution which later came to Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia. He did not have to flee from Iconium, neither was he stoned with Paul at Lystra. He apparently was spared "much tribulation" (Acts 14:22). When time came to go on another preaching journey, Paul refused to take John Mark, ". . . **who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.**" (Acts 15:38). Barnabas and Mark left together. What happened to them? Barnabas had succumbed to false teachers and had previously compromised (Galatians 2:13). No doubt he and John Mark were suitable to each other.

Paul and Silas continued the great work, but be it remembered that Paul refused to let John Mark go along. Were there songs to lead? I do not know, but I do know that if there were, Paul would not let Mark lead them. Was there communion to pass to the audience? I do not know, but I do know that Paul would not permit Mark to pass it. Were there sermons to preach? Yea, verily, but I know for a fact

that Paul would absolutely refuse to introduce John Mark as the preacher. Did Paul do right? Did he judge Mark? Do you not think that we are in good company when we stand beside Paul? Time passes on and we are certain that John Mark made many improvements in his life. The same inspired apostle who earlier refused to accept Mark, later wrote to Timothy and said, "**Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry**" (II Timothy 4:11). Had Paul changed his convictions? No, but rather Mark had *proved* himself with the passing of time. This is exactly what my brethren have every right to expect of me if I act a fool. I would hope that God would spare me so that I could change my wicked ways and prove my sincerity by love and loyalty to him.

None of us are immune from temptation and sin. We must be forgiving till seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22). When a brother becomes guilty of a flagrant and grievous sin he must repent and confess the sin. He should do all within his power to remedy the situation. This would undoubtedly take time in many instances. When a brother proves himself by a change of mind and life, I stand ready to help, assist, forgive, and lift up whomever—but **let them first be proved!** (Taken from *Contending For The Faith*, May, 1990, pp. 13-14).

REFLECTING ON REPENTANCE

Does making a statement constitute repentance? When Judas made the statement that he

had betrayed innocent blood did this constitute repentance (Matt. 27:4)?

Should an eldership repent of abuses attributed to it (such abuses the eldership deny to have had a part)?

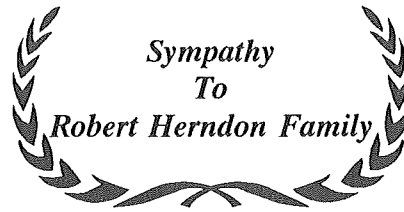
May an eldership repent for someone somewhere who has been abusive and committing sin? If I am sinning and being abusive does this make you guilty? If I am sinning and being abusive who should confess sin and repent for me?

If an individual is living in sin should I rebuke that individual in Christian love? If the rebuke which has been offered by others brings one to make a statement should those doing the rebuking feel guilty? Have the ones doing the rebuking sinned? Should those rebuking false teachers ask forgiveness for laying charges of wrongdoing at the feet of wrongdoers?

If individuals make a statement about false charges attributed to "innocent" persons and say, "We have perhaps brought charges and laid charges at their feet. We pray that you would forgive us of those things.", for whom are the individuals praying? The party that has been improperly charged? Those who have brought the charges? The person leading the

prayer? All the above? None of the above?

There is a need for serious reflection on the subjects of repentance, confessions, fellowship and unity. [editor.]



Brother Herndon was a loyal supporter of the Florida School of Preaching. He taught mission classes until his health rendered this impossible.

Among the contributing items to the Lord's cause were the following: He preached in the Mid-South, near Memphis, Tennessee, worked with the Mid-South Christian Nursing Home serving as Administrator, Director of Public Relations, and was on the Board of Directors. He did mission work in Korea, Okinawa, Papua, New Guinea, and Ghana. While in New Guinea he acted as liaison with the host government obtaining approval for a total of 94 missionaries and missionary helpers to implement a 25-year plan to evangelize Papua, New Guinea.

Brother Herndon also worked some with the Sojourners, a traveling group of Christians helping small churches free-gratis. When he died he was serving as the treasurer of the North Lakeland Church of Christ.

Services were held in Lakeland with a second service at the place of burial in Amite County, Mississippi. Brother Jackie Stearsman conducted the local services and brother B.C. Carr

conducted the service in Mississippi.

8-11-90

Staff of Florida School of Preaching



Dear Fellow Christians:

The wreath of red carnations and static was beautiful.

This was a wonderful way to express your sympathy to the entire family of Bob Herndon, and we all thank you.

Am sure you were all aware of his love for the work of the school. Thank you all for your support during his last days.

Zora M. Herndon

\$2,378.00

For

Florida School of Preaching

We are deeply appreciative for the generous brethren of the **Lake Placid Church of Christ**. This congregation supports the school \$300 per month. Knowing of the special needs of the school during the summer and early fall, these brethren put forth a special drive for the last Sunday of July and contributed the \$2,378. This contribution at this time will help to defray the expenses of beginning the school year with the need to purchase text books, etc.

We appreciate the good brethren in Lake Placid for thinking of us. Brother Willis Pack, preacher for Lake Placid, is a member of the Board of Directors for the Florida School of Preaching.

As Paul said of the Phillipian brethren, we thank God for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:3-4).

FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

1807 SOUTH FLORIDA AVENUE
LAKELAND, FLORIDA 33803-2653

DIRECTOR: B. C. Carr
Phone: (813) 683-4043

Address Correction Requested