

# The Harvester



## Preparing Souls

## To Serve The Lord



Volume 34

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## Maurice, As I Knew Him

By Jackie M. Stearsman

When I learned that Maurice had passed away, I immediately called the home and left a message expressing how many were so indebted to him. Maurice can never be replaced, and will never be forgotten by those of us who were privileged to have him as a brother and friend.

### Wisdom

His classes at school were most valuable to students from the years of experience he had and the insights he had into human nature. His phone often rang with a preacher, church leader, or individual Christian seeking his insight into a perceived dilemma.

He had a story for most every situation you find yourself in as a Christian. I could not tell you the times I have sought his wisdom with matters that pertained to the school. His wisdom was often manifested in the Board Meetings of the school where we served together.

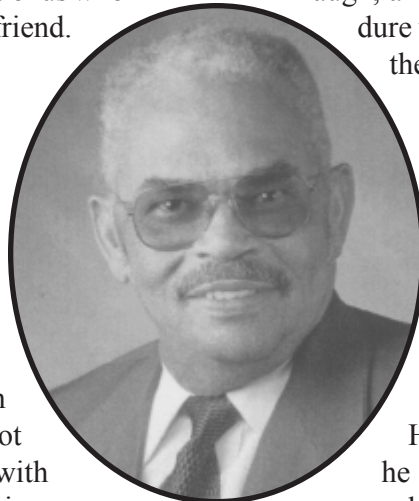
### Pride

Maurice took pride in what he stood for and wanted his associates in the brotherhood to do the same. He wanted Sixth Street to be an example to all of their devotion to serving God, and many are indebted to them for their sacrificial generosity over the years. When one spoke on any of their programs he was well compensated for his services.

### Humor

Maurice had a sense of humor. I could not number of laughs we had together over the years. We never met

without a humorous story or experience. Many of the laughs were on ourselves or on some foolish idea or effort made by those we knew and loved. Stress is helped with a laugh, and this is why no doubt Maurice could endure the stress he brought on himself in serving the Lord and others.




Maurice Davis, Sr.  
Feb. 13, 1933-Dec. 17, 2013

### Teaching

Maurice loved teaching. He loved the students and the school. Many are the students that will be known forever by their fellow classmates from the name that Maurice gave them. Many were the students that Maurice sought to help financially as well as spiritually. He taught until a week or ten days before he passed away. He would have died in the classroom or pulpit if he could.

### Friendship

I considered Maurice a genuine friend to me, my family, and especially the Florida School of Preaching. Before Joyce and I left, moving to Tennessee, I told her that I had to go and see him at Sixth Street before leaving. It was on a Sunday evening, and how thankful I am that I got to see my fellow worker in the Lord. I feared then that it might be our last time to visit, and my fears were realized when I learned of his passing. To Jeanette and the family please know the love and respect that you have earned over the years. 

“ . . . He Being Dead Yet Speaketh ”

# Brother Davis: “A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ”

By Brian R. Kenyon

Since 1989, when this editor began the two year program at the Florida School of Preaching, the passage that has come to mind when he hears the name “Maurice Davis, Sr.” is Second Timothy 2:3-4, which reads, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>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.” The reason for this stems from comments brother Davis made in class about this passage. In his characteristically calm conviction, he said that a good soldier does not want to leave the battlefield while the war is still raging. He certainly does not want to retire to a plush office somewhere to kick back and relax the rest of his life. Rather, he wants to take his last breath on the battlefield fighting faithfully for the Lord. On Tuesday morning, December 17, we learned that “there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in [spiritual] Israel” (2 Sam. 3:38). When the news broke, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” raced through this editor’s mind! Four points summarize brother Davis’ influence as a “good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

## Perseverance

According to Paul, a good soldier is to “endure hardness” (2 Tim. 2:3). The verb translated “endure hardness [hardship, NKJ]” means to undergo one’s share in suffering or to share in the hardship with someone (cf. “share in suffering,” ESV). The same word occurs in Second Timothy 1:8, where Paul tells Timothy to “be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” Brother Davis endured his share of “hardness.” He put to death “West Tampa Red” on November 15, 1962, by being baptized into Christ. As those who were socially aware back then know, racial tensions were high in some areas of the South, including Florida, even among a few members of the church. Whatever prejudice came his way, he handled in stride, as a good soldier. He told his students on a few occasions about going to a Christian College for a lectureship and deliberately asking, with emphasis, for *white* bread while going through the cafeteria line.

Not only as it related to being “a black man in a white man’s world,” as he would occasionally say, brother Davis also showed perseverance when it came to standing firm on the Gospel. Especially when discussing marriage, divorce, and remarriage,

brother Davis would remind his students that there is no “white doctrine” nor “black doctrine,” but simply the doctrine of Christ. There is extreme prejudice among some segments of the brotherhood against those who bind what God binds in Matthew 19:9. Sometimes those prejudices are expressed along racial lines, strengthened by the position a well known preacher and/or school may hold. Great pressures are placed upon preachers and congregations to hold that position. In other words, according to a segment of the brotherhood, if a preacher is of African descent and the congregation is predominately of African descent, then they better hold to the same position on divorce and remarriage as the popular preachers and/or schools or else they are regarded as selling out to “white man’s doctrine,” with fellowship consequences

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attached. Brother Davis did not entangle himself in those politics. Rather, he “endured hardness as a good soldier” by abiding in the doctrine of Christ, regardless of the consequences that might be (and in some cases were) levelled by that segment of the brotherhood who want to loose what God has bound in Matthew 19:9. Brother Davis’ goal was to “please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”!

## Persistence

Paul told Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (2 Tim. 6:12). To “fight the good fight of faith” requires persistence. A good soldier does not quit the fight when difficulties arise, no matter how severe they may seem, but he is determined to “keep on keeping on.” Brother Davis did not give up spiritually when difficulties arose (evidenced in the previous section of this article), nor did brother Davis surrender when physical difficulties arose. One sentiment he repeatedly expressed, especially over the last two years was that “As long as I am able to serve, I want to live [physically], but if it comes to the point where I have to be served to stay alive, I hope the Lord will take me.” As he said when closing out the last Gospel meeting at Sixth Street, “I want to die with my shoes on.” He may not have died with his literal shoes on, but, spiritually, he left this world with the “beautiful ... feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15).

Even after recovering from the 2013 heart attack, he wanted to continue preaching and teaching at the school. The school’s board of directors had agreed before his latest rounds of serious health problems that as long as brother Davis was willing and able, he could continue teaching. If he were to step down, it would have to be by his own determination. From his “profession before many witnesses,” experience, and persistence through preaching, he always had something worthwhile to contribute in the classroom and to benefit the students.

## Preparation

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Eph. 6:10-13)

These words of Paul summarize a good soldier’s preparation for spiritual warfare. The more a preacher knows about the Bible, the better prepared he is to face the en-

emy. Brother Davis graduated from the Florida School of Preaching in 1972, being part of the school’s first graduating class and being the first man of African descent to graduate from the school, which began in 1969. He continued his education by earning an AA from Hillsborough Community College in 1976, and a BA from American Christian Bible College in 1979. He later went on to earn a master’s degree in marriage and Christian counseling. Brother Davis was always hungering and thirsting for knowledge of God’s word. Many times he would ask his coworkers for good material on passages about which he wanted to know more. He knew that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,” and that an education in Bible could help in “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5)!

## Preaching

Paul told Timothy,

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. <sup>3</sup>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; <sup>4</sup>And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. <sup>5</sup>But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (2 Tim. 2:2-5)

In many ways, brother Davis epitomized preaching. Through his classes, students saw an encouraging balance between soundness in Scripture, importance of relationships, humor in storytelling, and wisdom in handling local work. Brother Davis had many “children” and “grandchildren” through his years of preaching. Though he did not refer to this editor as a son, necessary inference indicated he was, for brother Davis constantly asked how his grandson, Rick, was doing. Brother Davis had many one-liners that imparted wisdom, a sampling of which are “If people lie to you, they will lie about you;” and “the man you see on the



**Brother Davis’ last semester (Fall 2013, Book of Romans).** Front row: Taj Williams, Kyle Smith, Maurice Davis, Sr., Cody Walling, Jeremy Padilla. Back row: Gerald Griffith, Kenneth Harrison, Brian Kenyon, Rick Evans, Jack Pinckert. [Not pictured: Troy Postlethwait, who was at funeral.]

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outside, and the man who is on the inside, may not be the same.” Brother Davis also showed what is involved in preaching by making trips overseas to preach and follow-up with works Sixth Street was supporting. He made several trips to Haiti. He also directed the annual Labor Day lectureship for twenty years. Indeed, brother Davis “made full proof of thy ministry.”

### Postscript

Those who attended the last night of Sixth Street’s Fall 2013 Gospel meeting witnessed a farewell speech (though not known at the time), totally unacknowledged

by secular history, that would rival that of any American war hero. Again with calm conviction, brother Davis said he wanted to die with his “shoes on,” and made reference to the funeral he was preaching when the heart attack knocked him on his back...but he still had his shoes on. He said there was nothing left in life he wanted to do before he went to be with the Lord. He acknowledged how God had greatly blessed him. He said he was ready to go home, but was waiting on the Lord to take him. The Lord granted his wish. Prayers continue to rise for his wife Jeanette and his earthly and spiritual families. Indeed, “a prince and a great man” has fallen in spiritual Israel. 

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