

FISHERS OF MEN

By Danny Tunnell

“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.” (Matthew 4:18-20.)

Through the centuries since, thousands have believed that they were called to preach. Many have found their motivation to preach from reading Paul’s inspired words: “And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (Romans 10:15.)

One of the characteristics of a good preacher is his ability to relate to the common man. The Bible says of Jesus, “The common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:37.)

D. L. Moody lived from 1837-1899 and enjoyed enormous success

as a preacher, although he was often criticized for his lack of training and education. A well-known professor of homiletics (the art of preaching) went to hear Mr. Moody preach. He afterward told his class: “Mr. Moody violated every law of homiletics.”

Mr. Moody grew up in poverty. His father died when he was only four years old, and left his mother, Betsy, to raise and support nine boys on her own. Creditors came and snatched everything from their household they could - including the poor widow’s kindling wood. On some cold, snowy mornings in Northfields, Massachusetts, she kept her children in bed until it was time to go to school because there was not any wood for a fire to heat the house.

It’s unfair to judge Mr. Moody’s preaching by a college or seminary course in homiletics. He was only able to attend school through the fifth grade. But this uneducated, poorly trained boy would eventually teach Sunday school classes with 1500 in attendance. Presidents Lincoln and

Grant would visit those classes in Chicago.

Today we might think about a scientific angler who spends thousands on a fancy rod and reel, and the best lures. He goes to a brook and throws out his line. He does everything with such precision. But he fishes all day and catches nothing.

A little boy comes along with a freshly cut willow stick for a rod, and a piece of string for a line, a bent pin for a hook, and a worm for bait. He throws in his line and pulls out a fine, speckled trout.

On that day, who was the better fisherman? By the same token, God often uses the less talented, less educated person. Why? The glory goes to God and not to man’s ability. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7.) “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13.)

— Miami, OK

EMBARRASSED OR ASHAMED?

By Lewis Hale

Recently some gospel preachers were discussing problems plaguing our brotherhood. Much of the discussion centered on the fact that there is a concerted effort on the part of some to change the face of the church.

Some would alter the role of women in the church so that the ladies can have any role that the men do. Some would make the day of the week for taking the Lord’s Supper to be optional. One “prison minister” serves communion to prisoners on Tuesday evenings. Still others regard the use of instrumental music to accompany our singing to be a matter of opinion and not a matter of faith.

Questions were asked regarding why these views were being spawned. Those professing the views

claim they are the result of a new approach to understanding the scriptures. Someone suggested it was more likely that men decided what they wanted to do then found an approach to the scriptures which they believe would allow their practices.

It was suggested that these views may be held due to a combination of factors. One suggestion seemed more significant to me than the others. Someone said that these brethren advocating a “new hermeneutic” have found our “traditional views” to be an embarrassment to them. They are embarrassed in the presence of the “pious unimmersed” when we preach that sinners who are not baptized are lost. They are embarrassed when we preach it is wrong to use

instrumental music when singing in worship of God. ad infinitum.

I fear that the word “embarrassment” is not quite the proper word. It seems more to me that these people are ashamed. And Jesus said, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in the Father’s and of the holy angels.” (Luke 9:26.)

Someone long ago put it aptly, “I’d be ashamed to be ashamed.”

— Oklahoma City, OK

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16.)

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

HOW THE BIBLE SEPARATES ITSELF FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS BOOKS

By Milton Smith

One of the primary things that demonstrates the superiority of the Bible over other religious books is the amazing quality of its teachings. A few examples follow. The so-called “holy books” of Hinduism teach everything from evil gods to strange ideas about reincarnation. Buddhism’s religious books actually contain teachings and ideas that are atheistic. Shintoism teaches nature worship, ancestor worship, and emperor worship. Zoroastrianism promotes such ideas as polytheism, dualism, and often even appears to dignify hatred. Confucianism, like Shintoism, elevates ancestor worship, and much like Buddhism, promotes certain atheistic concepts. Islam’s main religious book (the Koran) promotes such disturbing ideas as fatalism, hatred, the degradation of women, and aggressive violence. Such violent actions have dominated much of the news for many years now.

Compare the ideas and concepts above to the main doctrines taught in the Bible. Only the Bible presents God as a Being who is holy, kind, gracious, and very interested in the well-being of mankind. The Bible promotes universal brotherhood and the indescribable worth of all human beings. Mankind is dignified and presented as possessing immense value. Man’s origin, purpose, and eternal destiny are all clearly presented within the pages of the sacred Scriptures. The concept of love dominates the pages of the Bible - the love the Father has for mankind, the love Jesus displayed when He went to the cross, and the love that God demands from us, His creation. Matter of fact, Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second greatest is that we should love one another.

But nothing separates the Bible from other religious books more than the amazing story of the One who came to offer eternal life through His own blood. The Bible alone portrays Christ as being so loving that he left his home in heaven, became incarnate in human flesh, and died vicariously for the sins of lowly mankind. In a way, all religions present human beings as helpless creatures. But only one - Christianity - tells the story of the loving Savior who came to redeem us. And because of the central story of this Book of Books (i.e. the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ), its final pages end with a glimpse of an abundant, eternal life in a world yet to come. The Bible towers above all other religious books for one, simple reason: its author is God!

— Tulsa, OK

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY FRIEND

By Dalton Key

I have a good friend. He doesn’t drink alcohol, thus has never been involved in any alcohol-related crimes or embarrassments. He doesn’t destroy his mind through the use of illicit drugs. I’ve never once heard my friend gossip or tell a single lie. He never wastes his time in night clubs, casinos, or questionable establishments. I can’t recall ever hearing him speak with profanity or vulgarity. And he has never cheated a soul in business.

Many people would call my friend a “good Christian.”

Yet you need to know that I have just described my dog, Patches!

We need to learn what being a Christian is all about; that being a Christian involves more than merely not doing evil. Being a Christian concerns actually doing good, fully submitting to Christ and living by faith.

Christ taught, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23.) Complete and total submission to Christ is essential if we would be called by His name. Like the brethren of Smyrna, all of us in Christ are expected to “be faithful until death.” (Revelation 2:10.)

The world holds many good and honest souls who are not maliciously engaged in the blackest of evils. Many of these good, moral citizens are our neighbors, our friends, our relatives. They may, in some cases, be more moral than some of the church’s more nominal members.

But they should not, by virtue of their upstanding lifestyles, be confused with “good Christians.” They may refrain from wrong; they may even be involved in promoting much that is right. But outside of Christ they cannot be considered Christians.

Not until one comes to Christ and obeys the gospel is one a Christian. No one can live a pure enough life to save himself, and there is still no other name to save us but the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:12.)

Remember, there is a world of difference between my dog and a “good Christian.”

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17.)

WE OWN NOTHING

By Bobby Key

God is the sovereign creator and owner of all things. God created all things, upholds all things, and gives all things.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1.)

“The earth is the Lord’s and all its fulness, the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1.)

“The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the Lord of hosts.” (Haggai 2:8.)

Of course we Christians belong to God not only because He made us and cares for us, but also because He redeemed us, and because we have voluntarily and gladly given ourselves to Him. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20.)

We are stewards or trustees of what we have and what we are. There is a difference between ownership and possession. As between man and man, we may claim to own things; but as between man and God, we own nothing. God owns all things. We may use them, temporarily, but ultimately they are to be returned to Him and an accounting must be rendered. God has never given a deed to any man for anything.

We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out, hence we are not absolute owners of anything.

The doctrine of stewardship is taught from Genesis to Revelation. The words “steward” and “stewardship” may be found over twenty times in the King James version of the Bible.

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2.)

— Miami, OK

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” (Revelation 4:11.)

Editorial . . .

MORE THAN A FELLOWSHIP, MORE THAN A MOVEMENT

By Dalton Key

The past several years have produced an uneasy, unfounded shift in brotherhood terminology, with the church’s very identity taking the brunt of the damage.

More and more is being heard from writers and speakers - our writers and speakers - concerning “our fellowship” and “our movement,” while less and less is being said about the Lord’s church. We enjoy both our fellowship and the fruits of the Restoration Movement, but we are members of the church which Jesus built.

A generation ago, preachers of the gospel proudly proclaimed the singularity and beauty of the Lord’s church. But times have changed and so has the language of many of our more modern preachers, editors and church leaders. It appears that now, at least in the minds of what looks to be a sadly growing segment among us, loyalty to the Lord and His blood-bought church is being blindly bartered for affiliation with either an historical, humanly devised movement or some undefined, nebulous and vaguely-bounded fellowship.

It is true that we, as God’s people living now in the 21st century, owe much to the honest and truth-seeking leaders of what has been commonly coined, “The American Restoration Movement.” Good and courageous men such as Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, James O’Kelly - along with a host of countless others of like faith and fortitude - performed a tremendous service to the world by leading men and women back to the Bible. But our roots run deeper than the American Restoration. Our history traces all the way back to the first Pentecost Day following our Lord’s resurrection, that wonderful day of beginning described in the second chapter of Acts.

We were not members of a denomination founded by Alexander Campbell. Campbell never intended such. He rather sought to point men back, beyond himself, to the risen Savior. He urged men to unite in the one, non-denominational, New Testament church.

Such was his plea. Such is ours.

I am thankful for “our movement.” I appreciate the blessings and warmth of “our fellowship.” But my allegiance, my loyalty, yea my very life, belong to the Lord and His church.

Regardless what seems to be the politically correct message of the moment, I’ll continue using the language of the Bible. I’ll continue calling the church, the church.



“THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME”

By Mark Lindley

I suppose I was a bit gullible in thinking it would never happen to me. I had heard of fishermen falling out of boats and had witnessed it, but I never thought it would happen to me. Why? Well, it would never happen to me because I was always “careful” when fishing from a boat, and “paid attention to what I was doing.”

Then, a few weeks ago, March 12, my middle son, Brock, and I were fishing on beautiful Pickwick Lake. We had not been fishing very long when I noticed that the back of our boat was about to make contact with a green, lake buoy (there are many of these in the lake). I leaned over the edge of the boat to push against the buoy so that the boat would not bump against it.

I suppose I leaned over too much, lost my balance, and - you guessed it - down into the frigid water I went! I went all the way under the water and then popped back up like a cork. It must have

been a sight for my son to see. The cold water nearly took my breath away, but between gasps for air I managed to tell him to “pull me out.” He grabbed my arms and snatched me from the water, quickly pulling me over the side of the boat. No harm was done. I just had to wear wet clothes the rest of the afternoon.

I told this story to make a point: we never know what a day will bring! “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1.) James wrote, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” (James 4:13,14.)

It is for this reason that we should always be ready for death; ready to meet God; ready for Judgment. It seems that everyone “plans” to make their lives right with God “someday.” Many have plans to “get started back to church” sometime. Many have plans to give up a sinful way of life. Many intend to give up drinking and adultery. Many have plans to obey the Gospel and get involved in the work of the church. But planning is not the same as doing it.

Notice this warning from Scripture: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts . . .” (Hebrews 3:7,8.) The only day we have is today, and “today is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2.) Don’t put off making your life right with God.

For 47 years I had never fallen out of a fishing boat. Things that we never dream will happen often do. Be ready!

— Ripley, MS

CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL

By Joe Slater

God has always wanted the allegiance of the heart, not merely rote obedience. Some have erroneously said that in the Old Testament people’s hearts did not have to be devoted to God, as long as they outwardly kept the commandments. However, the Old Testament itself said that loyalty of heart was indispensable: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

(Deuteronomy 6:5.)

Still, the Old Testament dealt much more with material and carnal things, while the New Testament has a greater emphasis on spiritual matters. For example, under the Old Testament, God’s people often engaged in carnal warfare to advance the Lord’s cause. Under the New Testament, “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” (2 Corinthians 10:4.) Rather, our sword is a spiritual one, the Word of God. The rest of our armor is also spiritual. (Ephesians 6:13-17.) We strive not to physically kill others, but to put to death the old man of sin so that a new man in Christ may come forth.

(Colossians 3:3-10.)

An earthly, political kingdom characterized much of the Old Testament era. Beginning with King Saul, dozens of kings reigned over God’s chosen people. Jesus is our King today, but He said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36.) His throne is in heaven, not upon the earth. And His kingdom knows no geographical boundaries, for He reigns within the hearts of His subjects.

Worship in the Old Testament centered around a temple in Jerusalem. Today, God’s spiritual temple is built, not of literal stones, but of his people as “living stones.” (1 Peter 2:4.) Similarly, in contrast to the various sacrifices of the Old Testament, we “offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:4), such as “the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15.)

The singing of God’s praises was accompanied in the Old Testament by numerous instruments: trumpet, harp, lute, timbrel, flute, cymbal, etc. (Psalm 150:3-5.) Under the New Covenant, however, we pluck not the carnal strings

of a harp, but the spiritual strings of the heart. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.) To return to playing musical instruments in worship would be no more fitting than the restoration of animal sacrifices.

Let us be thankful for the emphasis the New Testament places on spiritual matters. And let us worship God “in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24.)

— Justin, TX

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