

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Fill Your Life With Jesus!

(Luke 5:4-7)

Commercial fishing can be exasperating when the family's livelihood depends upon success. From the beginning of the world, men have found ways to catch the creatures of rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans with great success. Four of the apostles of Jesus were commercial fishermen. One day when Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, casting a net into the sea. Nearby were James and John, mending their nets in their father's boat. Peter and Andrew were in partnership with Zebedee, the father of James, and John, who also had hired men working for him. Calling the four men to His ministry, Peter, Andrew, James, and John became early disciples of the Lord and then called to be apostles.

Multitudes thronged to Jesus to hear Him teach about the Father. Coming to the Sea of Galilee, Jesus sat down in one of Simon Peter's boats and taught the people. After Jesus taught the multitude, He told Peter to launch into the deep and let down his nets for a catch. The night before, the fishermen had toiled all night unsuccessfully, and Peter told Jesus of their empty nets. Obedient to the voice of Jesus, the fishermen launched into the deep to set their nets. What happened next astonished the seasoned fishermen.

As the nets were put into the sea, a great many fish filled the nets. There were so many fish the nets began to break. Calling to James and John, and the other fishermen, Peter struggled to bring the nets into the boat. The catch of fish was so large the boats were sinking. This was a miracle that stunned the fishermen. Peter recognized he was in the presence of deity. The night before, the fishermen worked all night without any fish. When Jesus came into the picture, their boats nearly sank for the weight of the abundance of fish.

The Holy Spirit records the miracles of Jesus to prove the man from Nazareth is the Son of God. When the fishermen saw the incredible catch of fish, they could see the power of God. There was a more subtle lesson that is taken from the efforts of the fishermen the

night before and how things change when Jesus comes into the story. Fishing is a tedious and arduous job, often leading to empty nets, as the fishermen experienced that night. The labors of men are empty and fruitless when they try to fill their lives through their own wisdom. Men strive through the darkness of the night to find happiness, joy, satisfaction, and answers to life. As the morning breaks, they find empty nets without answers. All the strivings of men will be fruitless. It is not in man to know how to find real joy.

Lives change when Jesus is accepted into the will of man. Everything changes. What was an empty night of fishing becomes an overflowing catch of blessings. Jesus could have filled the nets with a few fish to satisfy the work of the fishermen, but the catch was so great the boats began to sink. The blessings of God do not come in small measure but overflowing. Putting the word of God into the heart does not make a man religious; it fills him with the glory and power of God. Intimately knowing the Jesus of scripture will change the life of the one who allows the blessings of God to flow through him.

There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who fish all night without Jesus and those who come to the Son of God for salvation and find blessings overflowing. The grace and mercy of God are not given in small portions. It breaks the boat. Trying to find happiness apart from God will always fail. Believing Jesus is the Son of God and asking for His power to work in your life will change everything. The blessings will overflow. And then eternity comes, and those blessings will never end. Who are you fishing with?

- Kent Heaton

Running With Certainty

"Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air." (1 Corinthians 9:26).

Paul, in his first letter to the church in Corinth, discusses his race to win the "incorruptible crown" for which he strove. All Christians are running this race for that crown. Let's look at some suggestions that may help us achieve the desired outcome.

In the religious world today, those who search for the truth find little more than confusion. There are many churches, many different creeds, many who believe they are heaven-bound, and even some who believe there is NO WAY TO BE CERTAIN which is the right way!

Who is right, and who is wrong? Has God left us with no way to unravel the truth? Man, not God, has created these problems.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8). The key to finding the right path is to look in the right place. "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39). People need to be like the Bereans: "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11). If we take the time to look, and to check the scriptures, we can know for certain.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Also read 2 Peter 1:19-20. God left us a blueprint and instructions to guide our footsteps through life. Man alone cannot know the direction in which to travel (Jeremiah 10:23). He must look beyond his own wisdom to the wisdom and path from above (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Colossians 3:1-2).

What must I do to be saved? Should I pray at the mourner's bench? Can I speak in tongues? What about the direct operation of the Holy Spirit? What does the good book say? HEAR--Romans 10:17. BELIEVE--John 8:24. REPENT--Acts 17:30. CONFESS--Romans 10:9-10. BE BAPTIZED--Acts 2:38. Yes, we can know what God wants us to do to be saved, if we consult the right source.

The one who consults God's book can answer with certainty, any question, concerning any spiritual matter. God is not the author of all this confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Are you running with certainty? If not, the problem may lie with where you are looking for answers to life's questions. Try God's book -- in eternity, you will not be disappointed.

- Keith Greer

Preach the Word!

I have received some rather strange looks through the years following my reply to people who ask questions concerning the requirements placed upon me by members of the church of Christ in order to teach a Bible class or preach sermons regularly in the worship services. Is there some book that tells you what to preach? Yes. It is the Holy Bible.

What makes you different from every other preacher who claims to preach only the Bible? It may take a while to answer such a question satisfactorily. Attitude toward the Scriptures is key. The revelation of God is not to be tampered with; it must not be altered. Problems

arise when personal desires override "Thus saith the Lord!" (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-4). The Holy Spirit warned that some teachers would fall away from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1). That fact must not be ignored for the purpose of accepting everyone with seemingly legitimate claims. Many preachers have not committed themselves to preaching the word (2 Timothy 4:2). Too many have taken liberties and been careless.

Personal attitude is important. Not only must the gospel preacher preach the gospel, he must do so out of love: love for God first (cf. Mark 12:30-31), and love for people (Ephesians 4:15). One must never think of himself as infallible or perfect in Bible knowledge. Times will come when mistakes must be corrected and further knowledge gained (cf. Ephesians 5:17), but what has at present been attained by diligent search to know what the will of the Lord is must be embraced and defended (cf. Acts 17:11; Ephesians 6:10-20). What the Lord requires must be understood, taught and defended. We must not omit anything that is required; we must not do anything that is forbidden. Every divine precept is sacred and indispensable!

All of the words of Christ and His specially chosen apostles, in their plain, obvious and original meaning is just as binding upon us as it was those who obeyed instructions from their mouths (except such things that are miraculous). We must follow what the early Christians followed and abstain from things they were taught to avoid. What they approved we must approve. What they condemned we must condemn. What we learn from the New Testament about what they were taught to think and do by the apostles we must steadfastly retain in thought and deed.

As with the early Christians, such serious dedication will be opposed by misguided people, unbelievers and enemies of Christ. Truth must not be compromised by intimidation from others. Diligence must not be slackened by frowns and opposing rhetoric.

When any man loves the truth and preaches it, he will be loved, respected, accepted and heard by all others who love the truth! The Lord Jesus confirmed before His Father, "thy word is truth." (John 17:17). Young man, learn the Bible and preach it! Then you will find out who are the real Christians! They will seek you out to teach Bible classes and preach sermons.

- Gary Smalley

* "Doubt sees the obstacles whereas faith sees the way!"

* "Whatever is done is all before the eyes of God!"

* "Failure isn't falling down -- it's staying down!"

* "Fall seven times, stand up eight!"

* "Feed your faith and your doubts will starve to death!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)