

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

FISHERS OF MEN

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Acts 2:37

When the LORD was in the process of calling HIS disciples (who would later be known as HIS apostles), HE told Simon (who HE named Peter) and Andrew that HE would make them fishers of men. HE used this unusual terminology to describe to them HIS purpose for them, since they were fishermen by trade. HE told them that the chief object of their harvest from that day forward would be men rather than fish. We see HIS prophecy fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as Peter preached the gospel to the multitude gathered in Jerusalem. A great harvest of souls was taken in as *"they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."* (Acts 2:41) and continuing forward from that day, *"the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47) Now in this passage there is evidence that the LORD intended for HIS word to be preached so that men might hear it, and hearing it might believe. (see Rom.10:12-17) HE has sent men into the world with that message for that purpose. (see Mat.9:38; John 20:21; Acts 13:2) HE even uses persecution and adversity to cause those whom HE would send to go forth bearing that precious seed. (see Acts 8:4; Ps.126:5,6) The preaching of the gospel is directed by the hand of Almighty GOD to accomplish a particular result and it shall not fail nor in any wise come short of that purpose. (see Isa.55:10,11; Deut.32:2; Mat.24:35; I Thes.2:13; Isa.46:10)

The modern day concept of soul winning seems to be devoid of that knowledge. It seems that the advocates of soul winning today have forgotten (or perhaps never knew) that there is a difference in men being drawn to CHRIST and men being persuaded to acknowledge HIS work and/or follow HIM. Many followed HIM when HE walked on the earth but they only did so for a season (i.e., temporarily). Some did so because they were impressed with miracles, some because HE fed them with loaves and fishes, still others because they were convinced HE was going to lead them out of earthly oppression and poverty. But the time came when they would not endure sound doctrine and practically all of them went away. (see John 6:60-66) Simon Peter gave evidence of his faith when he told the LORD that there was no one else for him to turn to. Peter confessed his faith when he told the LORD, *"THOU art the CHRIST, the SON of the living GOD."* (John 6:69). The LORD said to him, *"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to you, but MY FATHER which is in heaven."* (Mat.16:17) Peter was the recipient of heavenly revelation and gives evidence of the fact that no man can or will come to faith unless he is drawn. (see John 6:44,65; Mat.11:27; Jer. 31:3) The emptiness and weakness of much modern day preaching is because many believe that the purpose of preaching is to persuade men to "do something". Yet the scripture indicates that our main goal in preaching is to exalt the LORD JESUS CHRIST and then HE will draw men to HIMSELF. Redemption is the work of CHRIST from beginning to end. HE may be pleased from time to time to use men as vessels to bear forth the sweet healing balm of the gospel but make no mistake about this *"unless the LORD build the house they labor in vain that build it"*. (Ps.127:1) Modern day soul winning is built on the same principles of the flesh that any other sales endeavor is, that of "closing the deal ". Most spend more time trying to get

someone to "pray the sinners prayer" or make some commitment than they do in unfolding the unsearchable riches of the redemptive work of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. More effort is put into getting the mood right for the "invitation" or "altar call" than in the exaltation of HIM who gives eternal life to those who seek HIM. Nowhere in the scripture do we find evidence of any "preacher" asking anyone to "do" anything. There is ample evidence however of men being pricked in their hearts by the gospel, asking what they need to do. (see Acts 2:37; 8:36; 16:14,30). Many can be persuaded to pray a canned prayer, but only GOD can break a sinner's heart and cause him to cry out for mercy. So how should we be "fishers of men"?

1. **Know that GOD does not need "freelance" fishermen.** Be sure that we are sent. To preach the gospel to sinners requires that we operate in HIS power and under his guidance. Being able to share the gospel with someone is a privilege, not a right. (see Luke 10:2)
2. **Don't fish with an unmended net.** Be sure that the message we preach is JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified. (see I Cor. 2:2; II Cor.11:14; Gal.1:7; 6:14; Phil.3:17,18)
3. **Fish on the right side of the boat.** We need to fish in the spot we are directed to fish in, lest we cast pearls before swine. (see Mat.7:6; 15:26; Acts 13:45-47)
4. **Understand that sometimes the LORD would have us to fish without apparent result.** Just as the disciples fished all night and caught nothing, sometimes the design of the LORD for preaching is that men would not hear. (see Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; Isa.44:18; Acts 28:25-27)
5. **The task of fishing is not done when the net is drawn, but when the fish are safely aboard.** The LORD told us to make disciples (teach men) not just converts.(see Eph.4:11-16)
6. **Know that even when the fishing is best, some fish will be netted which are unfit and are destined to be thrown back.** Sadly, all who confess CHRIST don't know HIM. (see Mat.7:21; 13:24-30; Heb.10:29; II Pet 2:22)
7. **Know that it is the LORD who sends the fishermen and guides the fish to the net.** He is faithful to call HIS sheep by name and HE will be satisfied. (see John 10:3,14; Isa. 53:11)

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