



"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by George L. Faull, Rel. D. unless otherwise stated ~

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George L. Faull, Editor

THE MISSIONARY CONCEPTS OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

If the Apostle John were to speak at our missionary convention, what would he recommend to us?

He would remind us of what he said in the little epistle of III John. In it there are some good insights into world evangelism. It would be well if we paid close attention to his recommendations.

HE WOULD TELL US TO SEND MEN FORTH BEFITTING OF GOD'S WORK – VS 6

Is this the case in our churches? Do we send men out furnished as servants doing the work of God? Are they sent forth on the most important task in the world with the best of equipment? Are not the salesmen of this world's goods sent out with more modern tools than those who preach the Gospel? Should the missionary have to use outdated machines and literature to carry out the most important job in the world? Should they not be given the best of equipment that men have devised for the conveying of ideas?

I tire of seeing sloppy mimeographed tracts instead of eye catching multi-colored literature. Is it worthy of God's work to send out literature that looks as if it were printed by the underground of yesteryear?

It is time we get our priorities straight!

Our missionaries and their families should be properly provided for as they go forth bearing the Good News of Christ.

Is the missionary, who must constantly beg and improvise in order to preach, honoring Christ? Let us begin to bring them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God. Only then will we receive the commendation of the apostle John. It is to those who send properly equipped ministers of God who are told, "Ye do well."

Jesus sent out the 70 the first time without purse, scrip, or shoes. He told them to go in the first home which would have them. They were to depend on hospitality (**Luke 10:1-7**). But immediately, before His arrest, He said,

"When I sent you without purse and scrip, and shoes did ye lack anything?"

They answered, "Nothing".

He replied, "But **now**, he that hath purse let him take it and likewise his scrip and he that hath no sword sell his garment and buy one."

By this He meant to show that after He suffered, the world would not receive them with open arms. They were now to prepare for a hostile world. They were to go prepared. They could expect antagonism and strife. This is the world we face. We must finance our evangelistic thrust ourselves. We ought to do so in a manner that is becoming to God's messengers. We need to send knowledgeable and well-furnished preachers of God's Good News of redemption in Christ.

HE WOULD TELL THE MISSIONARIES TO TAKE NOTHING OF THE GENTILES – VS 7

Some read the verse "For the sake of the name they went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles."

Surely it does discredit the name of Christ when the preacher has to beg from those to whom he is presenting the truth. Regardless, if this is the correct reading, the New Testament evangelists did not take offerings and request money of their hearers.

They were supported by the Saints, not the heathen. They did not dishonor the name by requesting money and support from those whom they sought to convert.

Is this the case today of our preachers and radio and TV speakers? No, but in fact a quarter of the program is taken up with offerings appeals and requests for continued support. Let's reflect a little on the attitude of God's earlier Saints.

Abraham would not take of the spoil from the war with the kings. He said to his pagan neighbors, "I will not take a thread even to a shoelace and I will not take anything that is thine lest thou shalt say I have made Abraham rich." **Genesis 14:21-24.**

Later, Abraham refused to take a gravesite for his wife from the heathen in the very land God promised him for

his posterity. He insisted on paying the full price. He was a prophet, but he did not ask for a clergy discount. No, not even in sorrow would he take from the heathen.

Abraham did not ever own any land in the land of promise except a gravesite that he had purchased. He could have justified taking the land gratis, since it was all to be for his seed eventually. God promised all the land to His seed, so surely He would have a right to a gravesite now!

But, Abraham did not reason in that manner.

He bought it from the heathen.

He had taken from the heathen earlier and it had brought him heartache.

He had been given cattle and a slave girl by Pharaoh while in Egypt.

The cattle almost plunged him into war with his nephew, Lot.

He committed adultery with Sarah's slave girl and postponed the rightful heir's birth by 15 years.

He had seen the error of taking from the Gentiles. Now he refused the spoils of war the heathen offered or the gravesite for his wife.

Abraham learned from his mistakes. Oh, that we could do the same.

The Jews of Esther's day refused to partake of the goods of those whom they slew on Purim in self-defense. They protected their homes and lives but laid not their hand on the property of Gentiles who sought their very destruction (**Esther 9:15-16**).

They took not of the Gentiles lest it appear that they slew for gain rather than protection. We must beware that we do not appear to preach for gain instead of preaching to win souls for Christ.

Nehemiah and Ezra and the Jews of their day would not let the Samaritans and hypocrites help them build the temple (**Ezra 4:3** and **Nehemiah 2:19-20**). They took nothing from the Gentiles for the Lord's work! I'm afraid that modern Ezras and Nehemiahs would have sent out letters of appeal from their computer lists to all in Samaria. Their pagan neighbors Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem would have been on the board of directors or at least had their names inscribed permanently on the plaque of founding contributors.

Monthly newsletters would have been sent to each Samaritan who would contribute to the cause of rebuilding the temple. Little medallions shaped like the temple would have been sent from headquarters with the slogan, "I gave to the rebuilding".

Invitations to loan money for the reconstruction at 8% interest would have been sent out to any Samaritan who

was thought to have money. A prospectus for the bond program would have circulated en masse. But that was not God's way then. I suspect that it is not God's way now.

David would not take land or oxen from Araunah, the Jebusite King. David had sinned. He wanted to get right with God. The Gentile offered to give him oxen and land for a sacrifice. David's reply was, "I will surely buy it of thee at a price, neither will I offer a burnt offering unto the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing."

So David bought the land and later the very spot became the land on which the temple was built (**II Samuel 24:24**).

It had been purchased by a Hebrew as a place to worship God in sincerity and was not the land grant of a Gentile king. It was thus a fitting place for the temple to be constructed.

Paul encourages us with the right attitude. "Giving no offense in any thing that the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving (or commending) ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labours, in watching, and in fastings." (**II Corinthians 6:3-5**).

In **II Corinthians 4:2**, he speaks of "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

In **I Corinthians 9**, he speaks of not taking money from his new converts "lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." (see also **II Thessalonians 3:8-9**).

Do not misunderstand what I say! God ordained that he who preaches should be supported. But this support is to come from those in Christ, not those not yet saved. I believe God would bless our efforts if we would follow this principle. He certainly blessed these men in this regard.

HE WOULD ENCOURAGE THE MISSIONARY AND HIS SUPPORTERS TO BE CO-WORKERS FOR THE TRUTH.

He says, "We therefore ought to receive such, (that is, those who are sent out in a worthy manner, and who, for the names' sake, go forth taking nothing of the Gentiles), that we may be fellow helpers of the truth." (**verse 8**)

Do we view the missionary and his Christian supporters as co-laborers? When Paul pleads for help from Christians, he says, "In Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." (**Philippians 4:16-17**).

To the Romans, he speaks of delivering these gifts, "when therefore I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come to you." (**Romans 15:38**)

Paul surely held John's view that the supporters of evangelism and benevolence were co-workers with those who delivered the message or the aid.

John wants us to receive those preachers of the Gospel who are faithful. He wants us to help them on their way. We are to receive them into our home. Paul encouraged the Romans to receive Phoebe, "as becometh saints and assist her in whatever business she hath need of you." (**Romans 16:2**). He says to hold faithful men such as Epaphroditus in honor (**Philippians 2:29**).

Returning soldiers receive tickertape parades. Likewise, the soldiers of the cross who return home on furlough should be held in honor. Those who remained home making the military campaign possible, likewise, should be honored.

The arsenal worker is as important as the soldier is. They are co-workers. When both the sender and the sent fully appreciate the other's work and person, then world evangelism will meet with greater success.

CONCLUSION – THERE IS A WORLD TO BE WON!

It is necessary that both the Church and Her missionaries reflect on John's thoughts. Today it costs money to evangelize as never before.

However, the conversion of Nicodemus and the woman at the well had no expenses, but they were genuine. The majority of the conversions in Acts were without expense.

The early Church did not have printing presses, radio, TV, filmstrips, recorders, and videotapes at Her disposal. Still, souls were won. We must stop blaming all of our failures to win men on the stinginess of our churches. We do not need to beg from the very people whom we are trying to reach. We can win souls in spite of the lack of support.

It is a must, however, that we try to educate the brotherhood of their opportunity to share in the fruits of the laborers. It costs nothing to win those who travel life's way with us. **Remember the Eunuch?**

It costs nothing to pray for the salvation of those we meet who are already interested in the things of God. **Remember Lydia?**

It costs nothing to sing and let our joy be known so that others want what we have. **Remember the Jailer?**

It costs nothing to win the one next door to the church building. **Remember Justus?**

The early Church evangelized with very little costs because they did not wait to get where they were going to speak up for Christ. They did not wait for an audience. They **made** audiences.

The conversions that are recorded show us that evangelism need not be expensive. Some conversions in Acts are spectacular (Philippian Jailer). Some conversions are very simple (Lydia). Was the jailer any more saved than Lydia? No!

It is likewise true that some conversions take place at great costs (TV programs). Others are won to Christ by consistent holy living before a friend. Those won by TV are no more saved than the others. It is the Gospel that draws men to Christ, not the methodology used. Christ only needs to be exalted for souls to be won. When a missionary abroad or one of his supporters at home does this, souls will be saved.

Someone said, "The light that shines the farthest, shines brightest at home." This is true. However, because of our inability to "shine far off" due to finances, we must not cease to be "lights" at home. Any light draws insects. Let both the sender and the sent see to it that they are lights wherever they are.

May we not dim those lights by shoddy methods unworthy of God, nor by taking from the Gentiles, nor by failing to work together as a team.

Let's remember John's instructions!

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