

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #19:
MEMORABLE QUOTES FROM PIONEER PREACHERS
By John Temples

Here are some words of wit and wisdom from faithful gospel preachers of the past for your enlightenment and enjoyment. I am indebted to Gary Finley of Brentwood, Tennessee for helping me with research. --John Temples

“A man is not saved and then baptized. A woman doesn’t wash clothes because they are already clean.... She washes the clothes because they’re dirty. Man is baptized because he’s dirty and needs to be cleaned.” (Marshall Keeble)

In passing a Methodist camp meeting one day in September [Raccoon John Smith] stopped to watch a young Methodist preacher baptize a howling, rebellious infant by sprinkling water on the squirming body. When the service was concluded, he stepped to the front of the crowd and, identifying himself, took the preacher firmly by the arm and attempted to lead him toward the creek a few yards away.

“What are you trying to do, Brother Smith?” the young preacher protested. “Are you out of your mind?” “What am I trying to do?” John affected deep surprise. “Why, sir, I am going to baptize you by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his commandment.”

“But I have no desire for such baptism. I know of you; you are called ‘The Dipper.’ But you are not going to dip me. I’m a Methodist; let me go!” John tightened his hold on the man’s arm while the crowd watched, some in apprehension, others in amusement. “That is a scoffer’s blasphemy of a holy ordinance,” John said sternly. “Are you a believer?” “Of course I’m a believer,” the preacher said indignantly. “But

I'm not willing to be immersed. It would do no good for you to baptize me against my will. It would be wrong!"

"I don't understand," John said. "Only a few minutes ago you baptized a helpless baby against its will, although it screamed and kicked. Did you get its consent first? Come along, sir, we will have no more of this foolishness."

Marshall Keeble was asked what Paul meant when he said to "preach the gospel in season and out of season." Brother Keeble replied, "It means preach it when they like it, and preach it when they don't like it."

"The church grows when doctrinal truth is central. Unless the children and young adults we train are truly converted, we will not succeed in passing on our heritage of faith. In many instances, young adults leave the Lord's church for denominations because they were never taught the difference between truth and error. We must stay focused on the truths of Scripture." (Gregory Alan Tidwell)

Raccoon John Smith was asked by a denominationalist, "What is the difference between your baptism and our mourner's bench?" He replied: "One is from heaven, the other is from the sawmill."

"A dead fish can float downstream. It takes a live fish to go up stream. Come alive!" (Marshall Keeble)

The business of the church is to preach the gospel of Christ. It exists for this purpose....Every inch of the ground which we now occupy has been gained by gospel preaching, by a campaign of teaching the facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, and promises to be enjoyed. Every Christian should teach, preach, dispute, confute, rebuke, exhort and whatever else is necessary to get men to see the Truth, and to know the difference between the Truth and error. This is the work of the church." (George DeHoff)

"We will not hearken to those questions which gender strife, nor discuss them at all. If a person says such is his private opinion, let him have it as his private opinion; but lay no stress upon it; and if it be a wrong private opinion, it will die a natural death much sooner than if you attempt to kill it." (Alexander Campbell)

"The Bible says, 'Pure religion, before God, visit [the] fatherless and widows...in their *affliction*. Now, you know them widows that you've been a visiting ain't afflicted. Now you stop that...be pure.'" (Marshall Keeble)

"There was a time when you couldn't shake a liberal out of the churches of Christ with a fine-toothed comb, but now you can take a hay rake and bale them up." (Foy E. Wallace)

"I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects. I labor to see sectarianism abolished and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation upon which the apostolic church was founded." (Alexander Campbell)

“Actual harps in heaven? Who could believe such a thing? Is there also a department of cats to supply the cat gut strings? Ridiculous! Note that God ‘gave’ these harps to the singers. What else could this be except the voices which were created by God? In the entire history of the world up to this time, that is the only musical instrument which God ever made; and we refuse to believe that he will enter into the manufacture of mechanical instruments of music in heaven.” (Burton Coffman, commentary on Revelation 15:2 which speaks of harps in heaven.)

“We have no system of our own, nor of others to substitute in lieu of the reigning systems. We only aim at substituting the New Testament in lieu of every creed in existence; whether Mohammedan, Pagan, Jewish or Presbyterian. We wish to call Christians to consider that Jesus Christ has made them kings and priests to God. We neither advocate Calvinism, Arminianism, Arianism, Trinitarianism, Unitarianism, Deism or Sectarianism, but New Testamentism. We wish, we cordially wish, to take the New Testament out of the abuses of the clergy, and put it into the hands of the people.” (Alexander Campbell)

“Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” (Thomas Campbell)

“Our Lord prayed for unity, not some kind of loose-jointed union. There is a vast amount of difference between unity and union. It is possible to tie two cats’ tails together and throw them across a clothes line, in which case there would be union, but it would be far from unity!” (Garland Elkins)

“I do not get up every Sunday morning and decide whether or not to go to church. I made that decision fifty years ago.” (Gus Nichols)

“The fundamental error driving the current apostasy is trusting in human opinion rather than trusting in the Word of God.... Every aspect of Christian faith and practice is shaped by how you answer this straightforward question: Is the Bible the Word of God and, therefore, entirely true and fully authoritative, or is it not?”
(Gregory Alan Tidwell)

“Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church, or be made a term of communion amongst Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.”
(Thomas Campbell)

“Nothing discourages a song leader more than when selecting songs for a gospel meeting, he picks songs known and loved by all; only to discover that the songs he picks are not known by half the congregation, and by the other half are not loved.” (Anonymous/unknown)

“The Bible says the children of Israel went over on dry land in the Red Sea bed. Folks, when God does something, He does it right. When it says dry, it means dusty.” (Author unknown--possibly Marshall Keeble)

“Every generation produces a group of men with leadership ability who are not satisfied to leave the church as God created it.” (F. W. Mattox)

“Two objects were near his heart--first, to restore the service of God to the order God gave in the New Testament; second, to place a good, industrial and literary education within reach of every youth. He labored to these ends during his life, and desired his property devoted to them after his death.” (Inscription on the tombstone of Tolbert Fanning)

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(Note: the following quotes are not from preachers of the church of Christ, but they are worthy of reading anyway. --JT)

"It's not the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me--it's the parts that I **do** understand." (Mark Twain)

“I heard [someone] say the other day that a certain preacher had no more gifts for the ministry than an oyster, and in my own judgment this was a slander on the oyster, for that worthy bivalve shows great discretion in his openings, and knows when to close. If some men were sentenced to hear their own sermons, it would be a righteous judgement upon them, and they would soon cry out with Cain, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear.’” (Charles Spurgeon, Baptist)

Someone asked a famous preacher why he preached so much on being filled with the Holy Spirit. His reply was, “Because we leak badly.” (This quote is apocryphal-- I have no reference for it. But I heard it years ago and it has stuck in my mind. --JT)

“I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.” (John Wesley, Methodist)

“It's not our business to make the message acceptable, but to make it available. We are not to see that they like it, but that they get it.” (Vance Havner)

"A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes." (Mark Twain)

“I’ve noticed that everybody who is for abortion has already been born.” (Ronald Reagan)

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