

them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted [him] up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them

in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:1-12)

A true servant of God is always aware of the fact that they are simply vessels through which God works to perform HIS will and purpose! Much like your garden hose plays a key role in the transference of water from your house to the garden, we as servants of the most high God are called to perform much the same task, to simply relay his love to those around us. When we introduce "self" into the picture, it then becomes a clog in the hose, disrupting the flow of God's love in and through our lives. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

We are living in a time where satan, in conjunction with self-seeking church folk have pretty much conditioned the general population to avoid, at all costs, involvement with anything that remotely

resembles the church of Jesus Christ. Terms like "all they want is my money" and "they're all just a bunch of hypocrites" are being wielded as a means by which they remain in their sin while attempting to justify their not being or ever becoming involved with the body of Christ in any capacity. This is where we come in! If you know folks who have made a bold stand against the things of God, then take the things of God to them! Get creative, pick up the phone or write them a letter letting them know that you care. I have found over the years that the phone company and the United States Postal Service provide two of the most effective means by which we can daily spread the love of Jesus to people. The age old belief that it is the pastor and his staff's job to do all of the work of the ministry has created in the church today the equivalent of a welfare state. This demonic revelation that

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has been forged in the minds of many Christians that the giving of their tithes and offerings somehow releases one from service has greatly diminished the Church's effectiveness where spreading the love of Jesus is concerned. Don't buy it! "And he (God) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

It is time that we all throw off any preconceived misconception of what ministry should be, gird ourselves with the towel of loving service and be counted among the "Selfless Servants!"

Your friend and fellow servant in Christ Jesus,

Keith

Please pass this on to a friend when you have finished reading it. Thank you!



Toward the Mark

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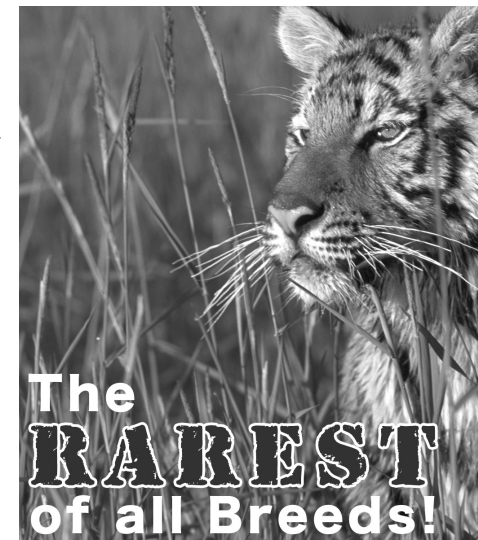
Keith Steady **PRESSIN' ON**

The Teaching Letter of Toward the Mark

Over the years I have seen several documentaries on television produced to bring attention to various breeds of animals around the world that some feel are nearing extinction. These documentaries are produced by people who believe very strongly that we are currently experiencing a steep decline in the numbers of some of our planet's rarest breeds of critters due to many reasons which include the destruction of their habitats resulting from new construction, hunting for sport or poaching.

Now, before you begin forming the opinion that I have become one of those tree huggin', animals rights wacko's, please hear me out! Just as the animal preservation crowd has its self-seeking, fringe extremist that have in many ways tarnished the reputation of the truly faithful of their ranks so does the body of Christ. As a matter of fact, just as in the church, if you were to press through the more publicly visible and usually immature fringe members of the animal preservation efforts, you will find at its core a truly dedicated group of people who are committed not to the acquisition of public recognition but the earnest well being of the animals that they are trying to save.

It is because of these small groups of devoted individuals, not the extremist, that we have seen and continue to see progress being made where restoration of these wonderful animals are concerned. It is in fact only because of the hard work and devotion of organizations like Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo and others like them that the next generation will not only be able to enjoy seeing these animals in the wild but will also reap the benefits of the crucial



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part that each of them play in the balance of our planet's highly sophisticated ecosystem. We must understand that God is, in fact, a God of purpose and that everything that He does is and was intricately designed and produced to fulfill a specific part in His overall plan!

This plan was enacted before the very foundation of the earth was even laid. When just one piece in His plan has been removed or tampered with the ripple effect eventually impacts all of us in one way or another. If something exists, you can rest assured that it has both been well thought out and assigned a crucial role to play in this most intricate of all chess games. God never will and never has made a mistake. If something or someone exists, there is a specific reason for it! His is one job site that you will never find a scrap pile on!

Just as God has designed and fashioned everything on this planet to play a very important role in the balance of the earth He has also designed and provided key elements to insure the proper balance, growth and advancement of the Church of Jesus Christ! "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians lays out these provisions in the form of what the Church affectionately refers to as the five-fold ministry, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the

ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-12) Remove or tamper with any of these offices and the balance of this very intricate system will not just hinder God’s plan and purpose for us today but the ripple effects will also cripple the church in the future. Although thousands upon thousands of books have been written on each one of the offices of the five-fold ministry, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you what I have personally found over the years to be not only the rarest, but the most important office of them all, “The selfless servant!”

When God designed the five-fold ministry I can assure you that He never intended for any of these offices to serve as a means by which one could obtain, for selfish reasons, a position of prominence within the church and community. On the contrary, it has always been His original purpose and design for these most important of positions to be occupied ONLY by people who are first and foremost “selfless servants” at heart; people whose passion it is to see the lives of others come into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and move into God’s very best for their lives. If this is not one’s sole purpose for being in the ministry then they would be well advised to back away from it and rethink their motives before continuing on any further. Jesus teaches us, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*” (John 10:1-2) If you notice, Jesus said, “*He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*”

What does He mean when He says “the door”? Where is this door? Several verses later in this same chapter Jesus very clearly explains the point that He was making. “*Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and*

the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:7-15)

There is a right and a wrong way to do everything and the right way to pursue serving both God and His people is to approach it in the same way that Jesus does, with an all consuming love for everyone, no matter who they are, what they can do for you or what they have done in life, good or bad! Before we can even begin to walk in this same kind of selfless love for others, we must first die to our own selfish wants and desires!

“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his*

life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” (John 12:24-25)

“*And he (Jesus) came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he (Jesus) sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same*

shall be last of all, and servant of all.” (Mark 9:33-35) This scripture must be etched in the hearts of all who aspire to function within the realm of “God’s love and service.” If it is not, then we are really no better than the hirelings that Jesus spoke of in John 10. “*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*” (Matthew 16:24-25) Those who are out for themselves and not out for the fulfillment of God’s dream will always function within the confines of lifeless religion.

Whether we realize it or not, there is such a thing as two versions of the ministry. One operates by power of the Holy Spirit and the other is the terribly distorted version fueled entirely by the arm of flesh. This is the principal difference between God’s ministry and man’s plans. “*There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*” (Proverbs 19:21) If you struggle with not being able to tell the

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difference between the two all you have to do is watch to see whether or not they truly love both God and people. God’s ministry and ministers are always totally focused on the well being of people while “man’s” devices are for the most part focused on doing things that bring them recognition in the eyes of their peers and overseers, these are always driven by how they are perceived. Much like some politicians will watch various polls to determine their next plan of action “religious” leaders will take their marching orders from the opinions of congregational members rather than God himself.

It is out of this “Godless” practice that dead religion is birthed. If love is not the motive for all we do then what we do will at best be a good work, always done at the expense of the right thing! Jesus said, “*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” (John 13:34-35)

Love, first for God and then for people, is the key ingredient for a life of Christ like service. “*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*” (Matthew 22:37-40)

So, if all the law and the prophets hang on love then without love whatever we do is futile. Paul teaches us this in his letter to the Corinthians, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) “*If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*” (1 John 4:20-21)

If love is not the foundation on which we build our lives and ministries then we have totally missed what Jesus has been trying to teach us all along! So much so that He refers to anyone who ministers

outside of the realm of love as a worker of iniquity. “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Think about it for a moment, a guest preacher comes to speak at your Church one Sunday morning. About half way through the service he steps down off of the platform and walks over to a middle aged lady sitting in a wheel chair that you and everyone else in the service has known to be crippled since birth. When he gets over to her, he places his hand on the top of her head and with an authority the likes of which you have never seen

before shouts, “Woman arise!” All of a sudden, the lady jumps up out of her wheelchair and begins to run around the sanctuary. Now, most would probably draw the immediate conclusion that this guy must be in pretty good standing with God if he can go around doing things like that. On the contrary, what Jesus was teaching us in the previous scripture reveals the tremendously important fact that just because someone per-

forms miraculous feats does not necessarily indicate that they even have a personal relationship with Jesus. “*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

Sadly enough, the church has become in large part filled with people who have never been taught this. It is as if it has always been taken for granted that miracles are simply an indicator or proof of God’s favor on someone’s life. This frame of thought could not be further from the truth! “*Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of*

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